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ABSTRACT

These five booklets present the program transcripts of a weekly series broadcast by member stations of National Public Radio. A wide variety of participants express their views on various aspects of the adolescent experience. Kenneth Keniston, Urie Bronfenbrenner and Margaret Mead are among those participating as well as teenagers themselves. The program topics include the common crises of adolescence, adolescent sexuality and sex education, the relationship of schools to adolescent problems, the juvenile system and adolescents, the adolescent's need for challenge, family relationships and sociocultural influences on adolescent behavior. These program transcripts are intended for anyone interested in or working with adolescents. (DOW)

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OPTIONS IN EDUCATION

PROGRAM TRANSCRIPTS OF
A WEEKLY SERIES BROADCAST BY
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NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO

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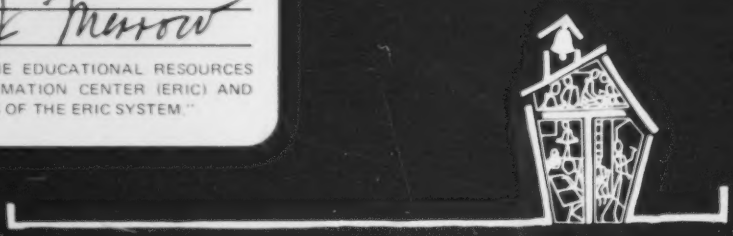

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"PORTRAIT OF AMERICAN ADOLESCENCE"

PART I

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and you're listening to National Public Radio's OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

* * *

BRONFENBRENNER: Adolescence is, of course, the time when the human organism is alive! Right?

WOMAN: At 17 I was so bubbly and so happy and so alive. You know, I look back and I think no worries that person.

WOMAN: You are in a state of becoming.

MAN: I remember very few of these self-conscious doubts and decisions and options that's popularly supposed of all adolescents.

* * *

BLAIR: We hope that makes you think of your own adolescence, of your teenage years of acute self-consciousness and carefree laughter.

MERROW: We'd like you to be thinking about those years, because we're beginning a special series on adolescence in America.

BLAIR: This week, and for the next four weeks, we'll be reporting on American adolescents: who they are, what they're doing, how society gets them ready for adulthood...

MERROW: Or holds them back...

BLAIR: And what grownups really think about them.

* * *

MERROW: Let's begin our look at adolescence with a definition.

BLAIR: Ok. Adolescence is a time of transition, from childhood to adult responsibilities. It's a time of physical, emotional, intellectual, and social changes. But that definition doesn't tell us when children turn into adolescents, or how many there are.

MERROW: It's not all that easy to count adolescents. We can't simply add up the number of teenagers, because adolescence may begin before age 13, and extend beyond age 19. For example, puberty, one accepted indicator, may occur at age 10, 11, or 12; and in the United States, some young people don't take on adult responsibilities until they're 22, 23, or 24.

BLAIR: We do know that there are 41½ million young people between the ages of 12 and 21, and most, but not all of them, would be considered adolescents.

MERROW: Let's be careful to avoid the trap of believing that all adolescents are the same, or even that all 14 year-olds are the same.

BLAIR: As you might expect, adolescence, the transition from childhood to adult responsibilities varies from country to country, and from age to age. Here's what Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in Democracy in America in 1839.

MERROW: "As soon as the young American approaches manhood, the ties of filial obedience are relaxed day by day. Master of his thoughts, he is soon master of his conduct. In America, strictly speaking, there is no adolescence. At the close of boyhood, the man appears and begins to trace out his own path."

BLAIR: In fact, adolescence in America is pretty much a 20th Century creation, an outgrowth of the industrial revolution, changes in the economy, and a belief that children needed to be socialized, trained and sheltered during the years before adulthood.

MERROW: How society treats its adolescents continues to change, but some things remain as true today as they were yesterday.

WOMAN: Now I have this sense, from the vantage point of the 30's, that everybody feels like an outsider during adolescence. Everybody struggles with, you know, the shape of your nose is wrong, and somehow your neck isn't quite right, but you're not aware that anybody else is facing those problems when you're a teenager. It's only you. And even though it's painful while it's happening, I worry about growing complacent, about things not mattering so much anymore, about not having the capacity to be moved. And yeah, I think I've lost some of it. I hope I haven't lost all of it, but I think that I was aware even then, that while it was going on, there was something very important about the intensity of the feelings you have then.

MERROW: A lot of people have told us pretty much the same thing. Adolescence wasn't necessarily happy or sad, but everything was intense then. Everything was heightened.

BLAIR: And today, as adults, they tell us all emotion from love to hate, sorrow to joy, is somehow less intense, or at least less tumultuous. And many say they wouldn't want to be 15 again.

MERROW: That's exactly the kind of contradiction we found throughout our research for this series. Adolescents are old enough to work, but often prevented from doing so. Mature enough to develop intimate relationships, but discouraged from doing so.

BLAIR: We also found, among adults, a genuine ambivalence about adolesence: envy of their youth, admiration for their energy, and yet fear of their passions.

MERROW: You don't have to be an adult to be able to look back on your own adolescence. Here's how one 17 year old remembers being 13.

REMEMBERING THIRTEEN

TEENAGER: I don't know, I just remember awful temper tantrums. I used to cry a lot, and I used to sleep a lot. I used to sleep and I used to cry. Sleep, cry, eat, go to school, it was a very easy schedule, I mean I didn't have to worry about, you know, figuring out my plans for the day. I knew it pretty well when I got up in the morning. And, I was very angry, and I'd turn it on myself, which is a very common affliction I suppose. You know, it was just, it sort of came back to me again, and it was very difficult then.

MERROW: Do you think that you're normal?

TEENAGER: I hope I'm not normal! I mean.

MERROW: Did you ever see the show "The Fantasticks"?

TEENAGER: No, oh, no, I know the show, I haven't seen it. I would like to.

MERROW: There's one number, "Dear God Don't Let Me Be Normal!"

TEENAGER: I guess I feel that way, but I guess I don't have to say "don't let me be normal." I guess I can, I sometimes get, I do sometimes become like very angry at myself and I get very upset and I think, you know, you're not that special. I mean, you become very obsessed with the idea that you're this and you're that, and when in reality, you know, all these people are thinking the same thing and, you know, maybe you're, it's just very depressing for you to think I'd be average; but then sometimes I think, well you can't be, there's no way you are.

* * *

MERROW: Even if adolescence is a time of contradictions, uncertainty and change, one thing is certain: it's beginning earlier, because puberty is occurring at a younger age. William McVey, a public health specialist and member of a task force on teenage pregnancy in Kansas City, explains.

EARLIER ONSET OF PUBERTY

MCVEY: In Western European civilization and in American civilization, there has been a tremendous decrease in the age of puberty and the age of menarchy. I mean, one of the great human biologists Tanner has said, not only are people getting bigger, but they're getting bigger quicker, as in the past 100 years. And there has been this gradual, gradual drop and decrease. Now, what's happened in the female population in Western Europe and in America, that the age of menarchy, first menstruation,is coming so much earlier. On the average, within a population say in 1890, that age of first menarchy would come about 16.5 to 17.5 years, if not higher. Some would agrue as high as 18.5 years. Where nowadays, in our North American society, that age of first menstruation, the age of menarchy, is coming at 12.5 years. Now that has staggering dramaifications.

BLAIR: William McVey, member of a task force on teenage pregnancy, talking with report Mark Poindexter, station KCUR, Kansas City, Missouri.

MERROW: Among the ramifications, are earlier sexual activity, and more pregnant teenagers. Today, 20 girls out of every 100 are sexually active: that is, have had intercourse by age 15. Twenty-five years ago, only three out of every 100 15 year-old girls were sexually active, according to the Kinsey Institute.

BLAIR: Earlier puberty has helped focus more attention on younger adolescents. One of the leading researchers in the field is Dr. Joan Lipsitz, of the Learning Institute in North Carolina. Dr. Lipsitz, author of Growing Up Forgotten, defines early adolescence as anywhere from ten or eleven, to 15 or 16. She believes that behavior, not puberty, is the most important factor in defining adolescence.

MERROW: She told Barbara Bernhard that we don't pay enough attention to early adolescence.

DETERMINING FACTORS OF ADOLESCENCE

LIPSITZ: What we see, as being adolescence, has to do with behavior, and

those behaviors are socially determined. So I think it's fair for us to say that, if we look at institutions, we're talking about 12 to 15 year-olds, if we looked correctly at institutions, we should be starting at about sixth grade and be talking about 11 year-olds, or perhaps even fifth grade, and talking about ten-year-olds. But that's not the way we look at them. We go one step beyond that with another mistake, and we say that these are almost pre-adolescents; and we think of adolescents, actually, as being those people who are in high school, and we think of most of the adolescents' so-called "problems" as starting in high school. And the junior high age population, we're not quite sure what to do with them; we put them on hold for a while, and give them a watered-down curriculum and think that for some reason they're going crazy, but the real problems are in the senior high school time. This is just ridiculous! I mean, all of the growth phenomena occurred during the junior high school years.

BERNHARD: Why do you see us putting the junior high school's students on hold? What is it about the 12 to 15 year olds that seems to frighten people, or is causing concern and yet nothing is being done?

LIPSITZ: That's a wonderful question, and I think you answered it in part by saying we're frightened. There are some very scary statistics about young adolescents, and we haven't put them together yet. We are reacting to them without really putting them together, but if we, let's just look at a few of them while bearing in mind that we're talking about a small percentage of this population. The crime rate, which everybody's very interested in now, half of the crimes in the United States now, or more than half, are being committed by juvenile delinquents, or juveniles. The juvenile crime rate has doubled, but the violent juvenile crime rate has gone up 216%. That's a very scary statistic. The number of runaways has doubled in the last five years. The runaways peak at age 14. So again, we're talking about this young adolescent population. The only age group in this country that is experiencing a growth in the birthrate at a time when the national birthrate is decreasing is the age group of 15 and under. The only age group that is experiencing an increase in institutionalization in mental hospitals is the age group 15 and under. So, we in fact have some very scary statistics. Socially it's scary. Personally it's scary, because adolescents are dealing with some problems, or some issues, that they have to resolve, and many of us are walking around with our own unresolved adolescent conflicts. It's difficult enough to walk around with those unresolved conflicts; to have a mirror of them facing us, is that much more difficult. And when the mirror speaks back to us, as adolescents do, and challenges us, you know, then in fact we not only are afraid of them, but we dislike them.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz, author of Growing Up Forgotten, a book about early adolescence. She talked to Barbara Bernhard of station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

BLAIR: Despite what she calls scary statistics, Lipsitz feels that we put too much stress on the turbulent and often pathological behavior of adolescence: suicide, veneral disease, pregnancy, prostitution, and alcohol and drug abuse. They are real problems, as Lipsitz points out, and next week on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, we will be focusing on some of them.

MERROW: Dr. Lipsitz is not the only one who suggests that many adults are afraid of their teenagers.

HOW THE STATUS OF YOUNG PEOPLE HAS CHANGED

KOHLER: Nationally, we're prejudiced against teenagers. I think as a nation, we're one of the worst in our isolating of teenagers.

MERROW: That's Mary Conway Kohler, a former judge and now Executive Director of the National Commission on Resources for Youth. She told Katharine

Ferguson how times have changed for adolescents.

KOHLER: If you look back over the generations, you see that young people were a needed group. Sometimes they were needed to the extent of almost being exploited, in the days when they worked long hours a day to help support the family. But now, they're not really needed at all. They're, even in the rural areas, the machines that operate are so large and so expensive that young people aren't allowed to man them, and there's very little, there's very few of the small farms comparatively. Also, they're not needed to care for the younger children, as they were in other times, because there aren't ten children to a family. And if there are two, they're near the same age, so it's not a question really of one caring for another. They're sent to school, and school directs their activity. It very seldom uses them as helpers. For instance, young people can be teachers of other young people. In the days of the old red school house -- little red school house, I guess it was old too -- the older children had to help with the younger children. That was the only way the classes could be managed. And in many countries today, the adolescents have a definite role, particularly in the less developed countries. The adolescent is very much a needed person. You hardly notice his transition from childhood to adulthood. They put him through the rites of passage as it were, they put him through an initiation into adulthood, so that he then moves more with the men of the tribes, for instance, than with the women; but they couldn't get along without him. We have very little of that.

MERROW: Mary Conway Kohler, Executive Director of the National Commission on Resources for Youth, talking with Katharine Ferguson.

BLAIR: As Judge Kohler, and others have indicated, conditions have changed for adolescents. In fact, the idea of adolescence is basically a 20th Century creation. The term first appears in the English language in the 15th Century, but it wasn't until the late 1890's and early 1900's that adolescence came to be viewed as a time apart from childhood or adulthood.

MERROW: By then, the Industrial Revolution had brought about great changes, and teenagers were less likely to be economically necessary to the family: that is, they weren't needed to help sell piece-work at home or harvest crops.

BLAIR: But because there were fewer small businesses and more white collar jobs in large bureaucracies, the new middle class had to train its children to be bureaucrats, to be middle level subordinates in complex organizations.

MERROW: So, while adolescents were economically less valuable to a family, nevertheless, families tended to keep them at home longer, to prepare them for an apparently more complicated future.

BLAIR: Joseph Kett, who has traced the history of adolescence in a new book, Rites of Passage, concludes that the rules for adolescent behavior, that is what's best for them, were based on values of the Protestant ethic.

MERROW: Like work, loyalty to the team, anti-intellectualism, and conformity.

BLAIR: That's right! Adolescence came to be seen as a dangerous time for youth, a time when the harmony of childhood was disrupted by conflicting drives: self absorption versus concern for others, energy versus inertia, clear insight versus childish folly.

MERROW: In short, adolescence was a condition that had to be treated, and the first step in the treatment of its "victims" was often to reduce to a minimum, the number of decisions the young person had to make.

BLAIR: That led to the creation of institutions that separated adolescents, regulated them, and made most of their decisions for them: institutions like the Boy Scouts, the YMCA, and the junior and senior high school.

MERROW: And so it's not surprising to hear Judge Mary Kohler, other experts and many adolescents saying that young people today need challenges. They need real work.

BLAIR: But we still put them into a holding pattern today, even though many are ready to be adults, to work and live in adult society.

MERROW: Many are sexually mature, but society puts obstacles in the way of their marrying. Child labor laws and a sluggish economy keep them unemployed, or working at menial tasks at sub-minimum wages.

BLAIR: Neither school nor home provide any real responsibilities, according to Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University.

ADOLESCENTS NEED REAL CHALLENGE

BRONFENBRENNER: If there's challenge in your environment, if there are mountains to climb, that takes care of a lot of the -- if you're doing something like that, you're not going to be too bothered about the fact that you're, you know, about your worries. Not that you won't have them, but there'll be things to do that are worthwhile, and you haven't got time for that sort of stuff.

MERROW: I mean, you're dressing up in very fancy language with what are cliches about growing up. My mother and father would say to me and my wife's parents would say to her that, "Get out and do something. Go out and work," you know, I grew up on a farm, that kind of stuff.

BRONFENBRENNER: No, no, no, you're doing something different. You see, you're saying go out and do something, that, what has to...

MERROW: No, I don't mean that. I mean they would say, "Hey, don't forget your job is to milk those three cows tonight," or my wife's parents would say to her...

BRONFENBRENNER: If it were really the job, you see, because nowadays you say, "Go out and take out the garbage," and you know damn well that your father and mother are perfectly capable of taking out that garbage, and they're just trying to get you to do it because they think that you ought to. Well, that doesn't have much with it, so to speak.

MERROW: We were talking about public policies. You were talking about the way we work, about the schools kind of thing. Are there really public policies that create these conditions, social policies that some how have been dreamed up somewhere in the level of government, that in fact, make us the way -- age segregated.

BRONFENBRENNER: Not in the sense that people have decided to do it for this purpose, but we have, as is the case in our, so much of our policy about children and families. Our non-policies are policies. Sure, we have policies in that sense. One of our policies is that, as we mentioned, the belief that kids ought to be by themselves a lot, you know, to be with their own age group. It's important for him to get along, learn how to get along with his peers, we say, see. We don't say it's important for him to get along with adults, we say it's important to get along with his own age mates. I'm not knocking the getting along with your peers, but I'm pointing out that it's selective brotherhood, you know. So we have a lot of institutions, and, as I mentioned,

the way we organize our school system. And what I'm, I put it this way, I'm not so concerned about open classrooms, I'm terribly concerned about open schools: that is schools that are opened to the community, where much of the work of the school is done in the context of the community, is related to what the community is doing.

In the Soviet Union, for example, the responsibility for the physical appearance and grounds of a school belongs to the kids. It's their school, their job to set up a system that will keep it decent. Right? You go into an American high school, American college indeed, and you'll find slop, you know: nice lounges with hamburger stains and pieces of bread and so on. It's not theirs! They have no responsibility for it. It's put there. It belongs to the university. Who are they? A bunch of board of trustees somewhere. You know, the hell with them.

BLAIR: Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University. We'll hear more from him later.

MERROW: Bronfenbrenner believes that it's necessary to look at adolescents in their various environments. He calls them landscapes: their home, the school, other social institutions, with their friends, and alone. We'll be doing that in this series, and you'll find out there's disagreement over which of these environments is most influential.

BLAIR: Money makes a difference in the lives of adolescents in two ways: their parents income shapes the kind of life they have, and the amount they have to spend on their own makes them part of something called the "youth market."

MERROW: You may be amazed to learn how big that "youth market" is -- $50 billion a year!

BLAIR: They spend it on products like radios, stereos, tape decks, cosmetics, clothes, food, and frisbees, skate boards, things like that. And, of course, selling to adolescents is big business. One man who watches this market and manipulates it is Melvin Helitzer, co-author of a book, The Youth Market.

THE YOUTH MARKET

HELITZER: It's almost shocking to me, as a marketing man, how easily I can influence them, if I can get them to believe that this is something that their peer group is doing. If I can get them to believe that it's going to do something for them, either make them more beautiful, or more healthy;in contrary, I can get them to do some very dangerous things if I wanted to, because they are easily influenced, easily reached and easily led.

BLAIR: Melvin Helitzer, co-author of The Youth Market, talking with Jo Ellyn Rackleff.

MERROW: Affluence can create special problems for adolescents, according to Dr. Kenneth Keniston, author of All Our Children. Keniston is Director of the Carnegie Council on Children.

THE PROBLEMS OF CHOICE

KENISTON: One overly simple, but still illuminating way of talking about those problems, is to say that they're the problems of an abundance of choice. It used to be that most people went on to do what their parents did. They were farmers if their parents were farmers, or they were seamen, fishermen and so on, according to what their families had done and what their families dictated. For the educated children of affluent families in America, their choices are almost

limitless, and there's no very clear, rational way of choosing between them. You can, you know, take aptitude tests and see how well you do in courses, but that doesn't tell you what kind of a job you're going to like. There's a real smorgasbord of lifestyles. Since marriages aren't arranged any longer, and haven't been for a long time, there are any number of spouses that you can choose from, or non-spouses, marital and non-marital arrangements; and at the same time, middle-class affluent kids usually have pretty high expectations in the background, because their parents want them to make something of themselves, and most of them, most of the adolescents or young people themselves, way in the back of their minds, have the notion that they should, that they have an obligation. So that the sum of this their thrashing around, some of the experimentation, both good and bad, comes, is a way of kind of trying things on for size, or trying on for size the possibility of rejecting the whole business. That was much more common in the '60's than today.

MERROW: And I think you're implying that it can be bewildering having all these choices, and it can end up as a negative.

KENISTON: It can end up as a negative. Absolutely! But I think, I always get a little worried when we start talking about the problems of being rich, and affluent,and educated,and having all these choices. You know, we should all be so lucky as to have those kinds of problems, I think. The real problems of this country are the problems of not being affluent, of not being white, of not having opportunities, and not having choices. The adolescents that I worry about are the adolescents who leave school, or barely get through high school; who enter the job market which it doesn't want people like them, because they don't have the right credentials, and they don't have the right qualifications, and maybe their skin isn't the right color, or they don't talk the right way. Their problem is not one of having too many choices; it's not having any decent choices at all.

BLAIR: Dr. Kenneth Keniston, author of a new book, All Our Children.

MERROW: Often there are different standards of justice for adolescents. For some, usually non-white and poor, one misstep can mean imprisonment and a permanent police record. For that same mistake, a short joy-ride in a borrowed car, for example, a white adolescent from a middle-class suburb, might receive a stern talking to, or perhaps probation without a permanent criminal record.

BLAIR: In some cases, adolescents who get in trouble with the law may be looking for attention. They want to know that somebody cares.

TEENAGERS IN TROUBLE

TEENAGER: When I've been inside, I found what makes the difference, and I finally went some place where I felt that people care about me, and really wanted me to do something to benefit myself. Ok, I really hadn't. In my younger years, I never really had anybody that cared for me like that.

TEENAGER: Any juvenile commits a crime, it's either for an act of attention, or for the fact they they feel that they're doing something wrong, that their life is so messed up that they need some help. And they're looking for it; they just don't know how to get it any other way.

BLAIR: Two adolescents, both with criminal records, in New York City, talking with Jo Ellyn Rackleff.

MERROW: Maybe what they say is true for some adolescents, but let's not lose sight of the fact that there are adolescents who burn buildings, who rob,

steal, rape and commit murder. Adolescents make up one fifth of the population, but they may be responsible for as much as 50% of the serious crime, but that depends on which experts and which statistics you pay attention to. For one thing, juvenile arrest rates have skyrocketed. But, arrests don't necessarily mean either guilt or conviction.

BLAIR: Theodora Sklovar, Director of Communications of the New York State Division of Youth Services told Jo Ellyn Rackleff that she believes that social institutions, particularly the schools, have failed many adolescents and thus created a climate for crime.

HAS SOCIETY FAILED ITS ADOLESCENTS?

SKLOVAR: I think you have to look at the larger society, and I think you have to look at problems such as welfare, and I think you have to look at problems such as schools. Also, there are statistics that match that, that talk about unemployment. Unemployment in this country has been soaring, as we know; but if you take a closer look at the statistics, you find out that consistently through all the unemployment, that the group that is always the highest in unemployment are teenagers, and then in addition to that, it's minority teenagers. And I think there's clearly a correlation between youth who do not have any money, who are not able to enter the job market, and the fact that you do find there's more crime out on the streets. I think you also, if you take a look -- I don't know about this nation-wide, I know it's true in New York City -- the truancy rate is growing tremendously. And I think that is another thing that realistically is going to account for more youth being out on the streets and getting into trouble. I mean, we have to really look more creatively at what we do for youth, who are 14 and 15 and 13, who have not gotten the basic skills, who are not going to be able to realistically enter the job market because they don't have the basic skills that they need, you know, to enter them. They also have very, very low morale, very, very bad self image. We find this is very true with most of the youth that is placed with us. I mean, their self image has been reinforced by society consistently, usually, from a very early age. They don't believe they can make it. If they have not made it in school, which most of them haven't, they've been out on the streets, the only alternative they see to making it is to be a big guy on the streets: to push dope, to knock over a local store, to steal an old lady's pocketbook. That becomes the mores, that becomes the culture for these youth. And we, our larger society, clearly does not condone that, but we have not been able to offer the kids a way into that large society. And the fact that we are not offering them a way in, we have rejected them.

MERROW: Theodora Sklovar of the New York State Division of Youth Services. She's a youth advocate, but not everyone agrees that youth crime should be blamed on schools. Educators are quick to point out that schools are being asked to feed, clothe, and even check the teeth of their students: that is schools are being asked to do too much.

BLAIR: Many adolescents commit what are called "status crimes," too. That is, they do things that wouldn't be called crimes if they were older: things like skipping school, or staying out later than the town curfew.

MERROW: Those adolescents, and the young people who commit truly serious crimes, are brought together in the juvenile justice system, which was in fact established so that children wouldn't have to be treated as adults.

BLAIR: Reform schools, with the emphasis on school, were set up as alternatives to prison. Later in this series, we'll take a close look at youth crime, and at some proposals for punishing and preventing criminal behavior by adolescents.

MERROW: But remember, most teenagers make it, and turn out as reasonably

well adjusted, functioning adults, who then in turn worry about their adolescent children.

BLAIR: Over the course of this OPTIONS IN EDUCATION series, we're going to meet quite a few intelligent, articulate adolescents: young people who've thought about themselves, and about the changes they're going through.

TEENAGERS DISCUSSING THEIR FEELINGS

TEENAGER: As far as being 17 instead of being an adult is concerned, it's wonderful because I realize I don't have too many responsibilities. I'm very happy right now, and if my life could just go on as it is now, you know, it'd be fine. I know that I'm always going to be taken care of financially right now, and people are very friendly. I don't have too many headaches in my life because I don't have too many responsibilities.

MERROW: What's the worst thing about being 17.

TEENAGER: The worst thing is making all the decisions, about college and everything now.

TEENAGER: Sometimes teachers will say, we'll be talking about a chapter in a novel or something, and then say, "Well, you probably wouldn't understand this," where you had all these ideas in your head about what you wanted to say about it, and then they'd completely turn you off.

TEENAGER: I really don't think it makes a large difference, your age, I mean. It just depends on your maturity and, well, what you've done, and the age is really, it's not as important as how you are. I mean they have to have certain limits as to who can do what and who can't do what, and age is one thing with which they can determine that. I mean, you know, when you're young, you're not an responsible supposedly, and you're not as smart, and so and as you grow older you get more responsible, and you are ready to bear more decisions and so on, so you have more bestowed upon you.

Kids do not usually worry about future that much, and they regard the work which they have to do as a sort of imposition on them; and thus, they can't enjoy it, because it's something they're forced to do. I mean you have to go to school, so you can't enjoy it.

TEENAGER: The one generalization that I can make is that they tend to sometimes want to treat you older than you are, but at the same time they want to make you feel, to feel grownup so that you are, but at the same time they want to retain some hold, or retain, you know, make you feel that you are still only 16, or only 17. And you know, this is a pretty delicate age, because I know that I myself, you know, find myself being tied down here and wanting to go off, but knowing that I'm not really to go off on my own yet. And though I sometimes really feel like I really am, I know that if it ever came down to it, I'd have a hard time I think, being completely on my own.

MERROW: That 17 year-old reminds us that adolescence probably has changed more for girls than for boys. First, menstruation is occurring at an earlier age for many girls; the pill has helped change attitudes towards sexual activity; and there are more job and educational opportunities for girls and women today.

BLAIR: Deborah Stipek teaches at the University of California at Los Angelss, UCLA. John asked her how adolescence today is different for girls than for boys.

STIPEK: It's a very confusing situation, and I expect that probably that may be a problem for a lot of female adolescents, that they're getting so many conflicting cues as to what they're supposed to be doing. There still are remnants of you're supposed to be a good wife and mother, but at the same time, you're also supposed to be a successful worker. And that may be too much of a burden to place on females, and I think we may be seeing in the next few years what kind of a burden that is placing on them, and what kinds of problems that occur as a result of so many mixed and sometimes contradictory demands.

MERROW: Now you say there's still a remnant of the message you're supposed to be a good wife and mother. I guess I would argue that the overwhelming message that is conveyed to young girls today is that message--good wife and mother--despite all the messages to the contrary about, and the changes in the society, I would suspect that the overwhelming cultural message is to, to young girls, has to do with marriage and motherhood.

STIPEK: Within the culture there are sub-cultures. In my sub-culture the message is just as much that one, a woman must also be a successful professional.

MERROW: But that's what I want, that's what, I guess, what I'm getting at, is the question of the blinders that people in your sub-culture and social scientists in general wear in their perceptions of the world. I suspect that you social scientists generally impose on the whole world that you're studying a view that somehow the world is much more like the way your world is, and perhaps the way you think the world ought to be; but that the real world that you don't spent quite as much time with has, those dominant cultural messages haven't changed all that much.

STIPEK: I agree wholeheartedly. I agree wholeheartedly.

MERROW: I attack you, and you agree wholeheartedly.

STIPEK: Sure. I think the...

MERROW: It's like punching the...

STIPEK: That's for sure. (laughing)

MERROW: ...marshmallow or whatever.

STIPEK: I can be self critical. It's allowed. Certainly professionals have a very narrow vision and really the questions they ask and many of the approaches that they have are a function of their own ethnocentric views of how the world works. I'm willing to recognize that the, perhaps the overgeneralizations that I might make about the demands that a woman, an adolescent woman, female adolescent perceives may be very cultural bound. But, however, we do have, although we have sub-cultures with different demands and different expectations, we also have a society which is, in which there is a tremendous amount of interaction, so that no sub-culture is isolated from others. So that, perhaps, in another sub-culture, the demand and expectations are slightly different than they are from my own. They're filtered through, and I don't think girls who are brought up in different backgrounds and different situations than I have are completely unaware and don't get some of the same kinds of messages that I do. I mean, we all watch the same TV programs; we all,to some degree, read the same newspapers; and I think that has maybe a leveling function in role expectations.

MERROW: I want to pursue that question of social science and distortions

of views, because I wonder to what extent assumptions about adolescents are colored by the fact that most of the research, at least I think most of the research, is really about male adolescence, and probably middle-class white male adolescents.

STIPEK: Yes. Definitely. And it's a very significant problem with research. Getting back to the specific question that I've been working with and I'm interested in, and that is how education responds, our educational institutions respond to adolescent needs. If we look at the significant studies that have been done in this area, and if we look at the kinds of solutions that have been, that have come out of these studies, you can't help but be struck by the possibility that both the questions that have been asked, the populations that have been studied, and the solutions that have resulted are very narrow indeed, and are only relevant to a subset of American youth. For example, to be very concrete about it, the suggestion that we need to let kids out of school earlier and let them into the work environment may be a very useful thing for kids who've already learned how to read, who've already mastered the basic skills that are necessary to function in our society as an adult. I think it'd be great if they could get some work experience, and I don't, you know, it may be unfair to essentially incarcerate them in some kind of high school environment when they could learn more in a work environment. However, there are kids who haven't learned to read by the time they get to high school. There are a lot of kids who need some of those skills, and to...

MERROW: What you're suggesting is the researchers made their assumptions on the basis of the kids they know best, which are their own kids maybe, who in fact can read and so on.

STIPEK: Sure. Sure. I think it's somewhat irresponsible, and it's very dangerous on the part of experts and researchers to forget that the social policy that they're suggesting may only be a good social policy for a subset of the population, and then, evidently, it's extremely important that the solutions be considered for all kids. It may mean that we need many different solutions.

BLAIR: Deborah Stipek of UCLA. The fact that she's an adolescent psychologist emphasizes how times have changed in the field of adolescent psychology, which one researcher 50 years ago wanted to rename "boyology" because of the almost total concentration on young boys.

MERROW: Around the same time, another adolescent psychologist, J. Adams Puffer, wrote that girls could never experience the "hour of glorious conflict, when the blood leaps and the muscles rally for mastery, (laughter) the decent manly pride in taking one's punishment and fighting it out as long as one could stand and see."

BLAIR: The problem of studying young, white middle-class boys, and then drawing sweeping conclusions about all adolescents persists apparently. That's one charge leveled against three major studies of adolescence done in the 1970's. Later in this series, we'll be reviewing the three studies, all of which analyze how young people pass through adolescence into adulthood. All three conclude, in effect, "Make some major changes and quickly."

MERROW: But, there's fourth study, done after the first three, which draws the opposite conclusion: "Hold your horses, things aren't so bad after all," it argues.

BLAIR: And, we'll be introducing you to a researcher who persuaded 72 high school students to wear buzzers for a week. He then buzzed them nearly 100 times during one week, and had them report on what they were doing and how they felt about it.

MERROW: Another researcher, Richard Savin-Williams, an assistant professor at Cornell University, has been studying 12 to 14 year-olds, all upper middle class, at summer camp. He offers several generalizations about that age group.

SOME GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT THE ADOLESCENT AGE GROUP

SAVIN-WILLIAMS: These are basically upper-middle-class kids, and in that regard, whatever, may not be true for other kids, but it certainly appears to me that what is crucial for these kids is what other kids think about them. In fact, they do seem to carry around with them, sort of an imaginary audience all the time, so they're always judging on the basis of what other kids are thinking about them. And they want very much to be thought highly of, and they want to maintain that as much as possible. They also tend to be very up and downish in many ways, in a sense that they have very good days and moments, and then they have days in which they aren't.

MERROW: So do I. Does that make me an adolescent, or...

SAVIN-WILLIAMS: I think that in some regards they're no different than the regular population. I think maybe in some ways we've overstressed that, moreso than perhaps we should have. It's just that it's given more attention. I think in many ways they're more overt about it. When they feel bad, it's more obvious than when you or I feel bad; and when they feel happy, they're much more physical and it's much more obvious. They're very physical kids, both the girls and the guys. The guys, at 13, still don't have the inhibitions against physicalness, and they express that whenever they're interacting with each other. Later on, the 16, 17 year-olds, you never see them physically interacting. But at this age of 13, it's ok in that sense, and they do a great deal of it to express their feelings.

BLAIR: Richard Savin-Williams of Cornell University. His generalizations may not be true for lower-middle-class kids, or for non-white adolescents. That's one of the things we've learned.

MERROW: We've also learned that there are a number of myths which seem to have arisen because we either don't know any adolescents, or are afraid of them. The myth of the "terrible teens" is just that -- a myth -- according to Dr. John Donelan, Director of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinic at the Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, New York.

MYTHS ABOUT THE 'TERRIBLE TEENS'

DONELAN: The first myth is that adolescence is something that one passes through and is going to end. That's not true. I think one has to work at either enjoying and accepting their adolescence, and working through their actual problems. It's also assumed that everybody grows out of adolescence. Some people never grow out of adolescence. They remain quite adolescent in their attitudes and views all of their life, and they do not develop mature attitudes. Secondly, there's a myth that adolescence is a point in which children and, say parents, are in constant conflict, and that's not true either. Secondly, there is the myth that the peer group is the most important thing to the adolescent. That's not true either. Research indicates that despite the influence of the peer group, the family constellation is still the most important point of reference for any adolescent.

LEWIS: Isn't it also a myth that people feel that teens, as a group, are kind of homogeneous? Isn't there a great disparity between the various levels of maturity, as you mentioned before: social, academic, biological, emotional?

DONELAN: I think that it's even more complex than that. I think there are

wide cultural variations between Puerto Rican adolescents, black adolescents, low-white-class adolescents, middle-class adolescents. The whole system is looked at too simplistically, say "the teens." Rather you can look at these almost as sub-categories and sub-groups, each uniquely distinct. For example, the major problem with black adolescents is the question of economic, say security: getting a job, going somewhere. They don't have these opportunities. Look at the actual, the sad unemployment rates. One begins to see that these kids have a greater problem than white, middle-class kids, or perhaps than the Puerto Rican kids. So there are different social problems that are also reflected in the psychological and social development of the adolescent himself, and his particular ethnic group.

MERROW: Dr. John Donelan of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinic in Rochester, New York. He talked with Cathy Lewis of station WXXI, in Rochester

BLAIR: Earlier, Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University advocated giving adolescents more real responsibility. That, he admits, is easier said than done. Let's rejoin his conversation with John.

DEFINITIONS OF ADOLESCENCE

MERROW: I wonder if you accept, as a definition,or an attempt at a definition, the idea that adolescence is a time of primary changes in identity, autonomy, intimacy, sexuality, and achievement. It's a kind of time of discovery of the social self. Are those workable definitions?

BRONFENBRENNER: Well, in some societies, that's what adolescence becomes. I think there is, since Margaret Mead's studies back now almost 30 years ago, I guess there are more. There's certainly been further support for the notion that adolescence is something that's defined primarily culturally. And in some cultures, adolescence is as you describe it, and the experience of adolescence is quite different even within the same culture at different periods of its history. And certainly adolescence today is quite different from what adolescence was even a few years ago, so that...

MERROW: Let's focus on that. How is it different today than it was a few years ago?

BRONFENBRENNER: Well, I think to be obvious, the sexual revolution is reaching down further and further, so that, let's say, the adolescents today are the 12 year-olds, and the 11 year-olds, and the 10 year-olds. That is, they are having the experience that five years earlier, adolescents didn't get until they were 13, 14, and 15; and they in turn are having the experiences that adolescents used to have when they were 16, 17, and 18. And, for example, the age of menarchy has been going down--that is earlier--steadily in modern cultures, so that the girls are beginning to menstruate earlier, and are expected to participate, and sexual experience is part of that; so that the whole business changes quite radically. And it's part also of a general change in the whole context of what it means to be growing up in American society, a change which, as I think you know, I have regarded as not in the best interests of the development of human beings.

MERROW: Well, I wonder if you think there are universals in adolescent experiences? Are there things that happen to every adolescent? I know everybody has to go to school, but beyond that?

BRONFENBRENNER: You mean in the United States?

MERROW: Yeah.

BRONFENBRENNER: Or you mean universal...

MERROW: In the United States, universals.

BRONFENBRENNER: Well, even there, of course, the experience of adolescence is quite different in different sub-cultures. In the black sub-culture, urban black sub-culture, rural white, certainly native American Indian, adolescence is today a, still a different experience. So no, I would not say that there are universal experiences. But there are universal problems with which every culture, or situations with which every culture must deal; namely, that this young person is clearly becoming adult size, and somehow, the society takes cognizance of that. That's the time for our society, it is increasingly seen as a threat and a source of dismay and distress to parents as their children reach adolescence, because, as I said in testimony before the Congress, somewhat to the, I guess, dismay of the Senators who heard me -- I think it was Senator Taft, when he was saying, "Professor, what do you think is the most critical age from the point of view of human development?" And he was, you know, setting me up to say that, "Sir, the first six years of life." And I said, "Sir, the junior high school," and he did a double-take. But I think the whole group understood rather quickly what I meant, because in American society today, that is, I think, the period which is the period of adolescence, in which young people are left in the greatest, in the most vulnerable situations.

We have established an age-segregated society. We have persuaded ourselves that each group ought to be, you know, by itself. They ship the old people down to Florida, and the teenagers ought to have their own life. We've got the rec room for them, so we can have peace and quiet, and so on; and we are, in my judgment, neglecting the fact that we are a species which is not wired in biologically for the young to be able to grow into adulthood, except through the intervention of -- and I do mean intervention -- of an adult member of the species. It's much more important to our species, than it is say in birds, even though, as we know, the birds, the parent birds teach the fledglings to fly. Well with us, there's much, much more that the young have to learn from the old, and that means there has to be an occasion, there has to be time, and unless that happens, you get the uncontrollability.

BLAIR: Professor Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University. Uncontrollability and its consequences among adolescents will be our special focus next week in Part Two of this series on adolescence in America. We'll be reporting on what's called the pathological behavior of adolescence: pregnancy, suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, prostitution and vandalism.

MERROW: We hope you'll join us next week, and for subsequent programs in this five part series. But, before we go, and because we're focusing next week on things that go wrong, it's only fair to give the last word to Dr. Joan Lipsitz, author of Growing Up Forgotten.

CONCLUSION

LIPSITZ: To generalize across the entire population of young adolescents, is certainly to set us totally in disarray when we are making policy, and I believe we will do this, but it will be very ill advised to say the least. It's interesting that, although most people see adolescence as being a pathological age in and of itself, when you in fact look at the rate of emotional disturbance, it's approximately 20%. Now, one is not going to sneeze at 20%, at the same time, that is exactly the rate of emotional disturbance that's found in studies about the population at large, the adult population. Which is to say that a young adolescent is no more or less likely to experience emotional disturbance that requires professional help, than is an adult. That's very important to bear in mind. In fact, and this is a very startling finding, there are now two or three very careful and very large and longitudinal studies that show that approximately 70% of adolescents make it through this time of great change relatively serenely. Now that really breaks down a myth that we have about the

inevitable, necessary, tumultuous storm and stress.

* * *

BLAIR: This special five-part series on adolescence in America was developed by John Merrow, Jo Ellyn Rackleff, David Selvin and Katharine Ferguson.

MERROW: Material for this program was provided in part by Mark Poindexter, station KCUR, Kansas City, Missouri; Barbara Bernhard, station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Cathy Lewis, station WXXI, Rochester, New York, and Jo Ellyn Rackleff and David Selvin in Washington, D.C.

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BLAIR: You can purchase this set of five transcripts of this series on adolescence by sending $2.00 to National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C., 20036. The five cassettes are also available for $25.00.

MERROW: The set of five transcripts also includes a bibliography of reference material about adolescence. The five transcripts cost $2.00. The five cassettes cost $25.00.

BLAIR: We also have, free for the asking, a program guide with our schedule for the next three months, and a list of available back transcripts.

MERROW: Here's our address again: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C., 20036. Ask for Programs 92 through 96, and please tell us the call letters of your NPR station.

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* * *

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and this is NPR, National Public Radio.

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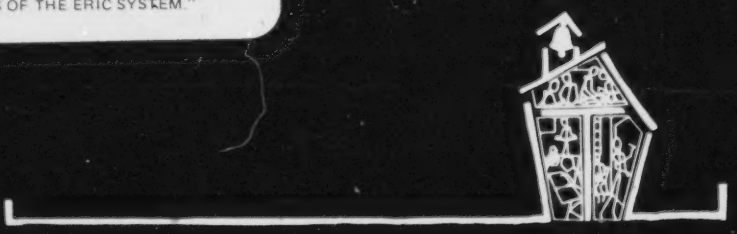

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"PORTRAIT OF AMERICAN ADOLESCENCE"

PART II

MERROW: I'm John Merrow.

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair, and this is National Public Radio's OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

MERROW: This week we're looking at some of the problems facing adolescents today.

• • •

TEENAGER: The whole dating scene that I seem to see in the situation comedies on TV just doesn't seem to exist.

TEENAGER: When I was 12, I used to play around with you know, guys on the back stairs of the school.

WOMAN: In my neighborhood, babies are having babies.

TEENAGER: When I got pregnant the second time, I really wasn't expecting it.

TEENAGER: At the time I really didn't conceive of the fact I was going to die! I mean, I knew I was going to die, but there was no reality in life that wasn't much different.

SHIMMEL: There was also clear evidence that younger students were starting to drink earlier.

WOMAN: It's a fact kids get high, and they should know how to enjoy it and do it safely.

• • •

MERROW: Most adolescents don't have problems like those.

BLAIR: In fact, experts tell us that nearly three-quarters of our young people do make it into adulthood without severe trauma.

MERROW: But enough things do go wrong for enough adolescents to make problems like pregnancy, suicide, and alcohol and drug abuse matters that should concern all of us.

BLAIR: There are over 40 million young Americans between the ages of 12 and 21: that is, on route from childhood to adulthood. Most, but not all, of them are adolescents.

MERROW: It's difficult to make generalizations about any group that size, especially when we're talking about ages 12 to 21.

BLAIR: Some have taken on adult responsibilities like a steady job, marriage, and family, while many others have not.

MERROW: There are two observations we can make with some certainty about the period known as adolescence: for most kids it begins earlier than it used

to, and it lasts longer.

BLAIR: Puberty, one accepted indicator of the beginning of adolescence, does occur earlier these days, probably because of better health care and nutrition, and our complex technological society's need for an increasingly educated work force keeps kids out of work and in high school or college, delaying adult responsibilities.

MERROW: If there aren't very many generalizations that stand up under scrutiny, there are lots of myths about adolescents, particularly about the troubles they have and the troubles they cause.

BLAIR: Most of the myths arise because we invariably do generalize. We see a small group having problems, and we assume that all adolescents must have those same problems.

MERROW: Reporter Barbara Bernhard talked to Dr. Joan Lipsitz, a prominent researcher in the field of adolescent psychology. Lipsitz believes that our myths about adolescence prevent us from distinguishing between what she calls "troubling" behavior and "troubled" behavior.

NEED TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN 'DISTRESSED' AND'DISTRESSING' BEHAVIOR

LIPSITZ: If you in fact see the whole group as being pathological, and I think we do. We don't say it that way, but we'll say, what we will say is, that -- all parents will say this -- "Well, you know, now we're approaching the teenage years, you know. Batten down the hatches and get ready, because the stormy seas are ahead."

If you have an expectation that all behavior is going to be tumultuous, then two things happen: one is that you help create it, it's a self-fulfilling prophecy. At the very first sign of testing out behavior, which is similar to a toddler's testing out behavior, you react either violently against it, and you put down all kinds of inappropriate controls, or you throw up your hands in despair, and you abdicate all responsibility exactly at a point when the adolescent, in fact, is almost hiring you as a police officer to say, "Yes" and "No" at appropriate times.

So, on the one hand we help create problems by this myth of, "They're all crazy, they're all off the wall, they're all pathological." On the other hand, if we expect all of them to be very disturbed, then we are not going to look at the kids who really are very disturbed, who in fact are distressed. In other words, we haven't learned to distinguish between "distressing" and "distressed" behavior. "Distressing" behavior is behavior that "drives me up the wall," and I have to learn how to deal with that as a parent, as a teacher, as a professional of any kind, working with a young adolescent. "Distressed" behavior is disturbed behavior that needs professional intervention.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz of the Learning Institute of North Carolina, author of Growing Up Forgotten. She spoke with Barbara Bernhard of station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

BLAIR: One consequence of earlier adolescence is earlier sexual activity. That's often a real problem for adults who are upset by what their children are doing, or by what they THINK their children are doing.

MERROW: But in fact, the problems brought about by earlier sexual activity are more real and more immediate for the adolescents themselves.

BLAIR: Dr. Murray Kappelman, a pediatrician and author of Sex and the

American Teenager, describes the problems that early physical maturity and sexual activity can create for adolescents.

PROBLEMS OF EARLY PHYSICAL MATURITY

KAPPELMAN: Well, I think it's number one, the early maturation -- body maturation -- without emotional maturation, so that suddenly their body is blossoming when emotionally they're not ready for it. Secondly, it's the stimulus that they get from the media and magazines -- my goodness, they're unbelievable -- which says "Play now, pay later." And it's very hard for them to counter that. Third, it's the lack of communication with a parent generation that grew up differently, may believe differently, and really don't want to hear much about what's happening out there. Fourth, it's the new emergence of the woman's independent movement, where the male is not so sure how he can keep up with this, particularly when his role model of a woman has an apron on in the kitchen, and his girlfriend is very independent and very demanding -- and the young girl today, who's being pushed by her own peer group into experimenting so that she's not an oddball

I think the other problems that exist are: having to make decisions as to whether to live together, or get married at an early age. And, of course, we do face the problem now with contraception of will I or won't I, do I or don't I.

BLAIR: Dr. Murray Kappelman, author of Sex and the American Teenager, talking with reporter Tom Colvin.

MERROW: That earlier sexual activity, often beginning at age 12 or 13, is the "troubling" behavior, but it's not necessary "troubled," to use Dr. Lipsitz' distinction.

TWO THIRTEEN YEAR OLDS TALK ABOUT THEIR SEXUAL ACTIVITY

TEENAGER: There's a "true love" and there's a "teenage love," and there's a lot of different loves as you grow up. And, you know, you just can't go around and go to bed with people when it's not that kind of love.

MERROW: Reporter Pam Gouge talked with two 13 year-old girls about their sexual activities.

TEENAGER: I only went further than that once, but it wasn't that much further, it was only to "second." And I regret it now. I'm sorry I did it.

GOUGE: It was, "second base" meaning petting, right?

TEENAGER: Yeah, right. And I could never talk to my mom about that, because I regret it. I feel ashamed of myself when I think about it now.

TEENAGER: It's not that you're in love at such a young age, it's just something that, I don't know, it just happens. And I guess cause everybody else does it. If no one else in the whole school is doing it, I don't think I'd bring it upon myself to do it. I guess it's just something you do. It's social pressures.

GOUGE: You think, you felt pressured into making out with your boyfriend, or you felt like it made it ok to do it?

TEENAGER: I felt, I didn't feel pressured into making out; into going to "second" I did, because everyone was doing it, you know. I don't know, I just felt pressured into doing it, and I guess that's how a lot of girls get pregnant. Then it seems the right thing to do, but now it seems like such a

mistake, and it's already done. But pregnant is something you can't hide from your parents. I mean, you've really blown it that time.

MERROW: Two 13 year-old girls talking with Pam Gouge.

BLAIR: Not every 13 year-old girl stops at "second base": that is, restricts herself and her boyfriend to petting above the waist. Reporter Carol Gable talked with two 14 year-olds about their sex life.

TWO FOURTEEN YEAR OLDS TALK ABOUT THEIR SEX LIFE

TEENAGER: Sex is a natural thing and it's, I don't see anything wrong with it.

GABLE: If it's a natural thing, why don't you go tell your mother?

TEENAGER: Cause my mom would probably have a duck if she knew. (laughs)

GABLE: Do you sleep with your boyfriend.

TEENAGER: Yeah.

GABLE: How long have you been doing that?

TEENAGER: For about two years.

GABLE: If you were to graduate from high school and you had never had sex with anyone, do you think people would think you were odd? What I'm asking, do you think virginity is a thing of the past, it's just old fashioned?

TEENAGER: Yeah.

MERROW: Those two 14 year-olds talked with reporter Carol Gable of station WEPR, Clemson, South Carolina.

BLAIR: Of course, virginity ISN'T a thing of the past, even with more sexual activity by young adolescents. Today 20 of every 100 girls 15 years old are sexually active: that is, they've had intercourse. Twenty-five years ago, only three of every 100 girls 15 years old were sexually active.

MERROW: That same study by the Alan Guttmacher Institute indicates that 43 of every 100 girls 18 years old are sexually active, and half of the 19 year-old girls are sexually active. But that still leaves a lot of teenage girls who, for whatever reasons, are not sexually active.

BLAIR: John and Tom Colvin talked with a number of 16 and 17 year-olds about their sex lives.

MORE ON TEENAGE SEX LIFE

TEENAGER: The whole dating scene that I seem to see in the situation comedies on TV just doesn't seem to exist in my school and among my friends.

MERROW: What is the situation comedy scene on TV?

TEENAGER: Well, the writers in Hollywood seem, or it may have been a few years ago, or it may still be in other schools that it was expected that boys and girls were always on the lookout for dating with each other. And I just don't find, I don't know whether it's like that in other schools, but here in my school now, I just don't find that there's any kind of pressure for one guy to go out with one girl. Sometimes a guy will go out with a girl, but it's

by [redacted] considered the norm that everybody has to adhere to.

MERROW: Are you, have you had sex?

TEENAGER: No. And, you know, I'd rather just not do anything because of the -- I would imagine everybody would, doesn't want to be pressured into it before they're ready. And, you know, I think I'll just wait until, you know, I meet somebody that I really like.

MERROW: How much pressure is there on a girl to be sexually active, to no longer be a virgin?

TEENAGER: A lot, I think. At least here there is.

MERROW: What form does it take?

TEENAGER: Other girls having been, having sexual activities, I think. I mean, everybody's friends, or you know. It's not so, it doesn't so much come from the guys.

MERROW: It's peer pressure of the same sex. I mean, it's girls, sort of, looking down on you if you aren't involved?

TEENAGER: No, I don't think they necessarily look down on you. It's just that, you know, they're doing something you're not, and here they are your good friends, and they're having this experience, you know, that's supposedly incredible, you know, and you're not having it.

MERRROW: When did you first have sexual intercourse?

TEENAGER: Well, all right, when I was 12 I used to play around with, you know, guys on the back stairs of the school or wherever. Yeah, I guess you would medically call that sexual intercourse, but it certainly wasn't anything, there was no emotional attachment, I think. And as I got older, I guess just maybe the last year, it started becoming something that meant something.

TEENAGER: There's a lot, you know, you know there's a lot of girls out there that just go out for just get their kicks off and their jollies and all,but, you know, me myself, you know, when I, you know, have a relationship with somebody, you know, it has to be a relationship with love, you know, understanding. If not, you know, there's no use in, cause they, you know. Just going to bed with a girl, you know, there's no point in it, you know. That's, you know, that's just sex, you know. But, you know, if you're in to go to bed with someone, you know, you understand them in a lot of ways, you gotta love 'em and you gotta respect 'em and.... It's gotta be a two way street.

TEENAGER: I was 13 when I first got laid, and since then I've been laid a few times.

MERROW: Same girl?

TEENAGER: No, it's been a few different girls. There's a girl down in Washington who's a friend from a long time ago. Some girls this summer. I haven't here with anyone, which is kind of strange. But, I've had sex with some people, sure. This summer, like, I find that I do much better with girls who are much older than I am, not my age. Girls my age, I sometimes have a little trouble talking to them because they do not have very much to talk about, because the things they think about are usually just clothes, and guys who are cute.

BLAIR: So it is hard to generalize, but it's clear that sexual activity

among adolescents is on the rise.

SOME REASONS FOR THE INCREASE IN SEXUAL ACTIVITY

KAPPELMAN: What's happening is that sexual activity--being a sexual human being--is being taken for granted by our teenagers. They're seeing it really as being biological, as being natural, as being part of their daily lives.

BLAIR: That's Dr. Murray Kappelman, author of Sex and The American Teenager, talking with Tom Colvin about some of the reasons for the increase in sexual activity among young people.

KAPPELMAN: It's not something that you do surreptitiously, or that you do behind a barnyard door, or, it's something that's part of your everyday living. They take it for granted. The question is not is it right or wrong, it's will I participate or won't I, and that's really quite different than the questions we were facing as teenagers.

I think the second problem is that youngsters are maturing earlier. Ironically, they are becoming sexually more mature about a year sooner than when we became sexually mature, which gives them a year's jump. Now remember, that year's jump is physical, not emotional; so they're still a 12 year-old, or a 11 year-old, but however, they have the drives of an almost mature individual.

And the other decisions that have to be made are in a changing society, and this is where we're beginning to see some very real problems. Problems among the young boys, for example: boys mature emotionally and physically much later than girls, and yet they often date, or go out with girls their own age. In today's society where women are playing a much more active role, much more interdependent rather than dependent role -- feeling somewhat liberated -- they are making sexual demands upon their partners, their male partners of 15 or 16 years of age. But boys may not be ready for this, and they begin to wonder, "What's the matter with me," and they can't use the excuse, "I have too much respect for you," because that doesn't work in many societies any longer today; they have to begin to look into themselves for the reasons. And you see, this is where parents can be extremely helpful by pointing out to the young man that, "Take your time, be your own person; you will get there and you don't have to worry about being the same as everyone else." I think the same thing holds true with the young girl of today, who hears all of this sexual discussion among her girlfriends, and who suddenly finds herself -- if I may be bold enough to say -- the only admitted virgin in her crowd. She begins to say, "What's wrong with me. My parents tell me it's right, but everybody else around me wonders why I'm different than they are." And I think, she has to be given the strength to be herself, to live with her own convictions; and these are things that parents have to realize. They take for granted that she's going to feel comfortable with her sexual ideas. She may not be in the crowd she lives in.

BLAIR: Author and pediatrician, Dr. Murray Kappelman, talking with reporter Tom Colvin.

THE POPULATION INSTITUTE

WOMAN: Do you want a baby?

MAN: Oh no, there'll be no babies, I got that under control. I mean guys know, it's embarrassing -- you're out in, with a chick and you're in the backseat of your car finally or something, and you're getting ready to go for that "action," right, and you find yourself asking yourself, "Is she hip to

birth control or not." And a lot of my friends just wouldn't ask, they would just go for it. But I found it was smarter to go the question route and ask point blank, "Are you on the pill?" or "Got some foam?" It has been embarrassing two or three times when they've said, "Why of course, you dummie!" But on the other hand, with some young teenage girls that go "What's that!" and I go "Oh ho ho, let's get back in the front seat. Watch the movie here, watch, this is the good part where the sharks..."

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WOMAN: What do you want from life? The Population Institute urges you to think about having a child, before you make a baby!

* * *

MERROW: Sex education via the radio, provided by the Population Institute. The message: use birth control!

BLAIR: That may be the message, but if the increase in teenage pregnancy is any measure of effectiveness, the message isn't getting across. Every year, more and more young girls are getting pregnant.

MERROW: Last year, one million teenage girls became pregnant, and 600,000 of them had babies. The other 400,000 either miscarried, or had abortions.

BLAIR: As you probably know, the birth rate in the United States is dropping, except among teenage girls, who last year accounted for one-fifth of live births.

MERROW: This is happening despite greater knowledge and use of contraceptives: that is, more girls know about and use birth control devices.

BLAIR: That sounds like a contradition, but it's not. What happens is that teenage girls learn about and begin using birth control devices after they go to a clinic. And very often, they go to a family planning clinic for help because they are pregnant.

MERROW: Abortion is one alternative available to the pregnant teenager. In some places, parents don't have to be told, and the girl's anonymity is protected. But even if abortions are legal and available, the decision to go ahead with it may not be an easy one.

WHAT ABOUT ABORTION?

TEENAGER: I use a birth control method, and so, I'm on the pill so that -- I was on the pill, got off it because of medical reasons -- so that I didn't really worry about it that much. And although, you know, once or twice it's happened that, you know, that I've had to worry about it, and, but I've never been pregnant. And, that's a very strange question now, because I'm an advocate of abortions. I think that the government should, you know help pay for them for girls that need them. But I think that when it comes down to myself, when I'm faced with the reality of maybe having an abortion, it's, I think, a lot more difficult. I can't really say,"well, yes I'll go ahead" -- I'm very liberal minded -- but when it comes to that, I know that lately it's been like that. If I've ever thought, I mean when I was younger, I, you know, it was an obvious,"of course I'll have an abortion," but I think lately it's been more in my mind, you know, maybe to have a child. Although I know I never would, but it does pop up into your head and it does, you do think about it seriously. I have talked to people that have had abortions, and a lot of girls have found it very traumatic. But a lot of girls just shrug it off, and that just seems to me so, so kind of cold, and sort of very unemotional. I

think, I think it's because, if I've thought I'm pregnant, it's usually with someone I love, and so, you know, that I think that does add something -- something of a responsibility, or something of a feeling for something in you.

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MERROW: I talked with that 17 year-old in New York City. Lloyd Gite spoke with several pregnant teenagers in Dallas, Texas.

REACTIONS OF SEVERAL PREGNANT TEENAGERS

TEENAGER: When I first found out I was pregnant, I was kind of scared, because I really didn't know what to expect from it.

TEENAGER: It just happened. I didn't plan it, and I wasn't looking forward to it; but after it happened, I just have to suffer the consequences.

TEENAGER: In the beginning, I really knew that I was already pregnant, but I kept telling myself, "Naw, naw, I ain't pregnant." And I went to the clinic, and they told me that I was two months pregnant.

TEENAGER: Everybody makes a mistake in life, but I feel it's a shame, you know, to be pregnant so young. You know, cause they say, like the doctor say, he say you should wait till your're about, you know, at least about 18 or 19, something like that, wait till your on up there, instead of waiting till you're young, you know, a kid, something like that. Cause you're just a baby yourself having another baby.

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BLAIR: Reporter Lloyd Gite of station KERA, Dallas, Texas, talking with several pregnant teenagers.

MERROW: One interesting thing we found out is that teenagers are having sex not in the back seat of a car, but more likely at home, when the boy's parents are away.

BLAIR: And parents, do they know this? How do they feel about increased sexual activity and pregnancy among their adolescent children?

PARENTS RESPOND TO THE INCREASED SEXUAL ACTIVITY AMONG ADOLESCENTS

PARENT: It's nothing new about them experimenting when they're 13, because I've talked to people: they say, "My mother got married when she was 14, my grandmother when she was 13," and so forth. So, what's new? That was a long time ago, but so maybe they're come the whole circle. Now they're just more uptight about it and...I don't know. They just make a big thing out of all these things rather than be relaxed about it and everything just moves along smoothly.

PARENT: Where it was a big thing for a girl to be a virgin at one time, now you're laughed at. It's a vicious circle, you know. There are children running the neighborhoods who are unwanted, uncared for, neglected, abused, and people keep saying, you know, "Well, why is this happening?" It's happening because the young people, these kids that are being born today, are going to go through the same thing that their mothers and fathers had been going through when they were younger.

PARENT: I know some boys who have had children by five different girls, and, you know, really think that makes them a man, because they've got five kids by five different young girls. And, of course, they're not really fathers, they've only biologically fathered five children. The welfare, somebody else is taking care of those other five children. But, I think that that's what

has to be built in. You know, it's not the idea of just the pleasure, sure there's pleasure there, and why should they be restricted from pleasure, but for every bit of pleasure that we have, we have to pay a price, ok.

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BLAIR: Reporter Tom Colvin talked with those parents in Baltimore, Maryland. The last woman sounds a familiar note: that girls suffer from a double standard.

MERROW: That is, if the girl becomes pregnant, she may very well be abandoned by the father-to-be, himself an adolescent.

BLAIR: Reporter Lloyd Gite of station KERA in Dallas, Texas, talked with some adolescent fathers.

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FEELINGS OF SOME ADOLESCENT FATHERS

TEENAGER: Yeah, it made me feel like a man to get a chick pregnant, you know.

TEENAGER: I love her and I want her, you know, and she's the best thing that ever...and I was glad I got her...

TEENAGER: Oh well, you know it ain't nothing new though. It's just an accident that happened.

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ADOLESCENT FATHERS ARE INCLINED TO ABANDON THE SITUATION

MCVEY: Among the social workers I've talked to on the commission say that most of them take off rather quickly once they find the girl is pregnant, in other words, they're not supportive during the birth process.

BLAIR: That's William McVey, a public health official and member of a task force on teenage pregnancy in Kansas City, Missouri. Reporter Mark Poindexter talked with McVey about the reactions of fathers-to-be.

MCVEY: We do know from clinical observations that fathers are inclined to desert the situation, they are not supportive, and that it looks like that the parents of adolescent boys are inclined to be terribly negligent and smug and complacent about this whole problem.

BLAIR: William McVey, a public health offical in Kansas City, Missouri, talking with Mark Poindexter, station KCUR, Kansas City.

MERROW: Pregnant adolescents under the age of 18 are unlikely to marry, and in fact, the rate of illegitimate births has nearly doubled over the past ten years. The Kansas City report found that in Kansas City, and across the country as well, teenage girls who become parents are likely to drop out of school and end up on welfare.

BLAIR: Dr. Catherine Smith, Director of the Adolescent Clinic at Childrens Mercy Hospital, and a member of the Kansas City Task Force told Mark Poindexter how adolescent girls react to becoming mothers.

SMITH: Of course, disbelief, denial, grief, tears, and I must say some of them are glad. This seems to be what some of them are seeking.

POINDEXTER: That's what I'm curious about. From your own experience, about what percentage would you say are happy when they got that news?

SMITH: I'd say three out of four are quite upset at being pregnant, but maybe, maybe a fourth of the older girls are, they see this as some kind of answer to their world situation that's distressing them, or some kind of way of proving themselves.

POINDEXTER: What do they hope it will solve?

SMITH: Well, some of the things that we've quoted in the report were: girls who said they needed somebody to love, they needed to prove themselves, this could establish their independence from their parents, this would make their boyfriend marry them, this is certainly a way out of school difficulties for some of them. The girls that are not achieving well in school, often find this as an outlet or an alternative.

MERROW: Dr. Catherine Smith, Director of the Adolescent Clinic at Childrens Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri, talking with Mark Poindexter, station KCUR, Kansas City.

BLAIR: Adolescents who do marry at age 17 or younger are three times as likely to end up divorced as those who marry in their early 20's.

MERROW: And what about the babies? Again, the statistics are depressing. The death rate among infants born to teenagers is more than twice that for first babies born to women in their 20's.

BLAIR: Babies born to teenagers are more likely to be premature, or have a low birth weight, and probably a low brain weight as well at delivery, because the pregnant teenager is less likely to take proper care of herself, or seek adequate pre-natal care.

MERROW: The Kansas City task force found that these problems are unnecessary. They could be solved by more education, if the young girls came to the clinic earlier in their pregnancy, Dr. Smith says.

BLAIR: The task force reported what other studies have also concluded: that poverty is closely related to the probability of pregnancy among teenagers. Poor children are likely to be sexually active earlier, by as much as two years, than are their well-to-do peers. Sexual activity is higher among children from single parent homes, too.

MERROW: The birth rate among adolescents is rising fastest of all for white teenage girls. The rate among young non-white girls is dropping, although it remains higher than for whites.

BLAIR: There's one other depressing fact: the rapid rise in venereal diseases. There's an epidemic. In 1956, there were just over 125,000 cases of syphilis and gonorrhea among young people ages ten to 24.

MERROW: Twenty years later, in 1976, there were 670,000 -- more than five times as many. The incidents of gonorrhea among adolescents age 15 to 19 is three times that of the general population.

BLAIR: And, the National Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia,

told OPTIONS IN EDUCATION that the statistics themselves are misleading, because gonorrhea in women and girls is asymptomatic: that is, there are no visible signs, and that means that a lot of women and girls have gonorrhea and don't know it.

MERROW: So, we're left with a lot of "mores": more sex, more contraceptives, more babies and more venereal disease; but we're still searching for an explanation.

BLAIR: One possible reason: adolescents are looking for stability in a world of divorce, unemployment, poverty and general uncertainty. They seek out each other, and often end up sexually involved.

MERROW: Robin Elliot of Planned Parenthood told Jo Ellyn Rackleff that we're all "passing the buck."

PARENTS ARE IGNORING THEIR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

ELLIOT: You've got a parent who says, that on no account will he have the subject taught in the school. On the other hand, that same parent is not doing anything at home either.

RACKLEFF: And the school is saying?

ELLIOT: The school, which obviously represents him and other people, is saying very often they don't want to handle it, and they do pass it back. Certainly, the kind of psychology that's being created, the sort of political psychology of "Let sex education remain in the home and the church" by the community is something that the schools have been able to use as a cop out. There's no question about it.

MERROW: Robin Elliot of Planned Parenthood talking to Jo Ellyn Rackleff. Dr. Murray Kappelman, author of Sex and The American Teenager, says parents should talk about contraceptives with their adolescent children.

KAPPELMAN: Any parent who has a 17 or 18, and maybe even a 16 year-old -- depending upon the society -- youngster, who is going steady for six months or longer, and doesn't ask the question in a very tactful, gentle way, "Would you like to talk, or is it necessary for us to talk about any type of contraception?" If that parent is unwilling to do that, they have their head firmly in the sand, and I don't have to tell you what's sticking up in the air. They're really being blind to a potential hazard.

MERROW: Author and pediatrician, Murray Kappelman. William McVey, a Kansas City public health official says adolescents are naive.

TEENAGE NAIVETE RESULTS FROM A LACK OF SEX EDUCATION

MCVEY: The funny thing is, although there is a great deal more sort of cultural knowledge within the adolescent population and the general population about sex, sexuality, there is an apalling lack of knowledge about contraceptive methods. There is this, again pathological fear of, or perhaps sort of a moral repugnance about discussing contraceptives with young people. I mean, we may eventually have sex education, and we probably have it in some schools, but woe betide the teacher, or the individual, who would show films on contraceptive methods. In most health planning clinics throughout the country, there are excellent films, very concrete films, on the various forms of contraceptives. But if a teacher ever did this, or a school system ever did this, it would be political suicide.

MERROW: William McVey, a Kansas City public health official. Barbara

Cambridge, the Director of Social Services at the Maternal Health and Family Planning Center in Dallas, Texas, says the information is available, and it's the adolescent's responsibility to get it.

THE ADOLESCENT'S RESPONSIBILITY

CAMBRIDGE: I would agree that the amount of basic information and accessibility for the information is very limited. But I'm also thinking in terms of the number of young people who know what's involved, but yet choose, for whatever reasons, to become parents. Many of them will become a parent -- many of the young girls will become a parent -- to satisfy the ego of a male, or vice versa. The male will become a parent, or help become a parent, to satisfy the feminine ego of a female. That is exploitation, all right. Young people have a responsibility for themselves. We cannot remove that responsibility. They cannot place that responsibility onto somebody else and say, "You did this unto me." It is a shared kind of neglect when an individual does not want to think for themselves, begin to ask questions about "Who am I, where am I going?"

MERROW: Early sexual activity and adolescent pregnancy can't be reduced to a single, simple explanation, like earlier maturation, or lack of sex education, or ignorance of contraceptive methods.

SUICIDE

PROPHIT: A lot of female unwed pregnancies might be a preliminary suicidal gesture, a preliminary cry for help; and if unheeded, perhaps the next step would be a suicide attempt.

MERROW: Suicide is the most extreme form of "troubled" behavior, and unfortunately, it's rising sharply among adolescents, to about 4,000 cases a year. That's an increase of nearly 200% in the last 25 years.

BLAIR: And a great number of suicides go unreported: that is they're treated as "accidental deaths," according to most experts in the field. Reporter Diane Rehm talked with Dr. Penny Prophit, assistant professor at the Graduate School of Nursing at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., about the type of adolescent who might be likely to attempt suicide.

PROPHIT: There is no particular type of characteristic adolescent who is inclined more toward suicide. Suicide is a very democratic phenomenon: it does not occur exclusively among the rich or the poor, nor is there a particular type of individual at greater risk. Adolescence itself is a risk period.

REHM: I have a feeling that there are some warning signs that it would be helpful to talk about here.

PROPHIT: Yes there are. I would say, primarily, any abrupt changes that continue, that are unusual in relation to that adolecence lifestyle. For example, an adolescent that's doing very good in school, who suddenly starts getting F's on papers,an adolescent who suddenly stops going to school, or drops out, or cuts classes consistently. The primary word here is a "major change" that is enduring.

MERROW: Dr. Penny Prophit of Catholic University, talking with Diane Rehm of member station WAMU, Washington, D.C.

BLAIR: When an adolescent commits suicide, it's especially tragic and painful for the surviviors, and the survivors are likely to feel guilty. Susan Stamberg, co-host of NPR's "All Things Considered" talked about adolescent suicide with Francine Klagsbrun, author of Too Young To Die.

KLAGSBRUN: Suicide among, of a young person provokes tremendous guilt among the parents of that person, and the teachers, and so on. It's as if they really failed. I mean, every parent worries about failing, and you worry about your kid not doing well in school, or whatever; but this is failure with a capital F.

MERROW: Francine Klagsbrun, author of Too Young To Die, talking with Susan Stamberg.

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TEENAGERS TALKING ABOUT THEIR ATTEMPTS AT SUICIDE

TEENAGER: When I did try, I really had no concept of actually what suicide was.

All I knew was that I had trouble surviving anywhere.

At the time I really didn't conceive of the fact I was going to die! I mean, I knew I was going to die, but there was no reality in life that wasn't much different.

MERROW: Those adolescents tried to killed themselves and failed. Connie Goldman spoke with them, and with suicide prevention workers in Los Angeles and Minneapolis, about adolescent suicide. Here's her report.

MAN: It's terrible when a young person dies from cancer, or causes that you can't do anything about; that's a tragic event of itself. But to have someone die by his own hand, just seems so unnecessary. It's so incomplete! To your life -- you didn't have a chance at life.

TEENAGER: All I wanted to do was leave. That was it. It was pressures, anxiety, there was no where to feel good, and there was no where to know I was going to exist. And it was like death wasn't just an irresponsible thing -- "Well, I can't face it and then I leave" -- it was another place to go, it was a way to get the hell out of there. And what I did is I took a bunch of sleeping pills, but they weren't prescription, and they really had no effect on me. That was the only time I've ever tried suicide. You know, it was just, I had to go away.

TEENAGER: And so I just thought,well, maybe if I kill myself then I wouldn't have to worry about anything anymore. So, I just went upstairs, and I was kind of scared to do it, but yet I was determined to do it. And, I told my mother, the next time she'd see me, it would be in my grave. And then I went upstairs and I took 22 sleeping pills.

MAN: I do feel, among young kids there seems to be more depression. There's less seeming joy, there's less laughter. But I seem to hear much less joy, much more trying to get away from stuff by going out and getting stoned or drunk, or cyncially laughing at the world and saying, "The hell with it!"

MAN: The vast majority of these youngsters -- even many of those that kill themselves -- are not trying to die, that's not their goal. Their goal is to somehow escape from the pain they're feeling, and they see suicide as an alternative. But they could accept another alternative, if somebody were able to present them with it.

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MERROW: In preparing that report, Connie Goldman talked with young people, and suicide prevention workers in Minneapolis and Los Angeles.

BLAIR: Four thousand adolescent suicides isn't very many. Only one-one hundredth of one per cent, or one adolescent in 10,000. It is at the same time, 4,000 lives too many.

MERROW: What is especially shocking is the increase in adolescent suicide: 200% over the past 25 years, while the adult suicide rate has remained stable over the same time period. Right now, the adolescent suicide rate is ten times higher than the adult rate.

BLAIR: Some experts think that means that today's adolescents are increasingly troubled, increasingly alienated from society, and feeling less supported at precisely the time they most need support.

MERROW: And if we accept the rise of adolescent suicide as a general indicator of youth anxiety, loneliness and mental disturbance, then we may be in trouble.

BLAIR: Experts tell us that suicide-prone young people tend to feel isolated, cut off from obligation and support. Edward A. Wynne of the University of Illinois in Chicago, says one solution is to surround the suicide-prone youth with support, to exchange the loneliness for immediate, personal responsibilities to others.

MERROW: That is, don't let the adolescent feel unnecessary. Earlier Dr. Joan Lipsitz, of the Learning Institute of North Carolina, distinguished between "troubled" and "troubling" behavior. "Troubling" behavior, she said, drives adults up the wall, but it's not necessarily pathological, or even harmful. But "troubled" behavior is a different story: it's concrete evidence that something is seriously wrong.

BLAIR: It's not easy to make the distinction between the two kinds of behavior, when it comes to drugs and alcohol.

MERROW: And it's hard to get a handle on the exact proportions of drinking and drug use among adolescents. One recent study of almost 2,000 junior and senior high school students in Middlesex County, New Jersey, found that few were drinking or using drugs excessively, but it did find that drinking and using marijuana are beginning very early: at age 12 or 13.

BLAIR: Researchers at Rutgers University's Center of Alcohol Studies conducted that survey. They found that of the almost 2,000 students surveyed, two out of every three said they drink beer, wine, hard liquor, or some combination; and one out of every three said they use marijuana.

MERROW: What surprised the researchers the most, was that the girls' use of both alcohol and drugs is about on a par with that of boys. Ten years ago, similar studies showed young girls behind teenage boys in the amount of alcohol they drank,and in the amount of drugs used or sampled.

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

WOMAN: The use of marijuana is certainly not restricted to youth in trouble.

MAN Lunch tickets can be easily converted into dollars for pot.

WOMAN: If adults are allowed to use liquor, and are allowed to use cigarettes, and the society is willing to say we condone this, we allow it, that we just can't then look at kids and say, but we don't condone your mechanism, your way of getting high.

WOMAN: Kids should have the right to choose, as anybody should. Kids

shouldn't be forced by their peer group, or by a magazine, or by the world that they should take drugs. Everybody has to decide what their own chemistry is, what their own needs are, and what they enjoy.

TEENAGER: As far as marijuana goes, they shouldn't be giving it a bad name, and say "highs."

TEENAGER: I don't feel that there's any great drug problem. Drinking yes, but not drugs, because most of my, I don't know any of my friends smoke, you know, on drugs or into anything like that. Smoking, there's a great deal of smoking,but not so much -- there's no vast drug problem. Drinking there is though.

BLAIR: These days, we seem to be more worried about adolescent drinking because drinking alcohol is on the rise among young people.

MERROW: The amount of alcohol consumed by juveniles has doubled in the last ten years: that is, it's up to an average of four 12 ounce cans of beer a week. Beer is the most popular alcohol among teenage drinkers. According to data collected by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism in 1974, one in four teenagers drinks at least once a week. And of those who say they drink, nearly half have been drunk at least once. Ten years ago, only 19% of teenage drinkers admitted to ever being drunk. Even more worrying is that 5% of teenage drinkers say they get drunk once a week or more, and 34% of teenage drinkers say their drinking is creating problems with schools, friends, or the police. These estimates are based only on young people attending school. Experts think the picture would be grimmer if dropouts and working teenagers were included.

BLAIR: This latest picture of teenage drinking is focusing more attention on teenage alcohol problems. Dr. Ernest P. Noble, Director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, believes that it's a problem of epidemic proportions.

MERROW: And so it appears that the "troubling" and perhaps "troubled" behavior of the late 1970's, is alcohol abuse, not drug abuse. American adolescents have "come back to alcohol."

AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS RETURN TO ALCOHOL

MAN: There have been reports of police bringing a kid stoned on alcohol home, and the response has been, "Thank God it isn't drugs!"

MERROW: Young people themselves seem to have mixed feelings about using drugs, drinking, or doing neither -- again demonstrating that it's hard to generalize.

BLAIR: Maybe things go in cycles -- fads come and go--and what we may be seeing is more adults using marijuana, while more young people are using alcohol.

MERROW: We're a nation of alcohol drinkers, and since adolescence is seen as the period of transition from childhood to adult responsibilities, maybe our adolescents are just hurrying to take on the adult "responsibility" of drinking frequently and in considerable amounts.

BLAIR: It's no laughing matter, of course, because alcohol inhibits physical growth, and adolescence is second only to infancy as a stage of growth and development.

MERROW: Katharine Ferguson talked with Dr. Gilbert Shimmel of Hunter College in New York City about the 1.3 million teenagers and pre-teenagers

who have serious drinking problems. He surveyed 93 high schools in New York City, and found that 80% of the boys and 75% of the girls used alcohol, most of them irregularly. But Shimmel found 12% drank enough to be considered alcohol abusers.

ALCOHOL ABUSE IS ON THE RISE AMONG ADOLESCENTS

SHIMMEL: One of the things that is concerning any of us who are working in this area is the lack of knowledge as to what alcohol, in big amounts that early, might do to the developmental process. You can talk about, you know, organic brain syndromes, and so forth, but here are people who have been drinking a very short time, who are already alcoholics; but also, they have not completed their development, either physically or mentally, or emotionally. And I used to speculate that if I had to bet on chances for rehabilitation of a heroin addict against an alcoholic, I would put my money on the alcoholic, because he was apt to be a mature person who had completed his schooling, had a job history, had a family experience and so forth; whereas the heroin addict, who generally started early, if he started at 15 and got off the stuff at age 30, developmentally, in many regards, he's still 15, and has no salable skills and so forth. Well, it's that kind of thing that concerns me about the young people who are showing up as alcoholics, because it could have a profound impact on their development.

FERGUSON: What is the picture, the larger picture look like?

SHIMMEL: I think everybody has the need for a "high," and it doesn't have to be a chemical "high." But unless individuals feel about themselves in such a way that they can really get "high" on other people, for instance, or unless they experience other things--and these other things can be anything from athletics to nature, to music, or whatever--they will seek the "high" chemically. And I'm convinced that what is needed is to build into our children a good feeling about self, and also give them some other "high" experiences.

MERROW: Dr. Gilbert Shimmel of Hunter College in New York City, talking with Katharine Ferguson.

BLAIR: Alcohol, drugs, suicide, pregnancy, and early sexual activity -- those aren't the only areas of "troubled" and "troubling" behavior among adolescents.

MERROW: Some adolescents commit serious crimes: murder, rape, arson, burglary, assault; and some reports indicate that the juvenile crime rate is skyrocketing.

BLAIR: Next week on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, we'll be reporting on juvenile crime, on society's efforts to contain it, and on efforts to rehabilitate the offenders.

MERROW: Other adolescents -- thousands a year -- run away from home. Later in this series, we'll report on why they run, and where some of them end up. It's not pretty.

* * *

BLAIR: We began this hour by pointing out that most adolescents do make it through unscathed to adulthood.

MERROW: And by reminding you, and ourselves, that we tend to accept a lot of myths about adolescence, including the myth that adolescence is always painfully traumatic.

BLAIR: Earlier, Dr. Joan Lipsitz told Barbara Bernhard that it's a myth that adolescence has to be traumatic, and there are other myths too, according to Dr. Lipsitz.

THE MYTH OF HOMOGENEITY

LIPSITZ: Another myth is the myth of homogeneity, which is that, they're all alike. And you notice, I, even in my own speech patterns -- I do this too -- I talk about them, and it's very easy to do that. "Them," they're all out there, we're here. It's almost like guerrilla warfare terminology we start using, of "they're" out there, with "their" minor skirmishes, and soon their going to be more than minor, they're going to be major skirmishes, and we're getting all of our battalions together, and our armored vehicles, and we get this control mentality. Sometimes I call it a zookeeper mentality. Whatever it is, it's a very destructive mentality. In fact, "they" aren't all out there, because "they" don't exist as a group. The heterogeneity, the tremendous variability among this age group is the most striking characteristic. These young people are growing along many dimensions: they're growing physically, they're growing intellectually, and that's a very exciting time. Because if ever a person is going to switch from what's called concrete operations -- thinking concretely -- to being able to think abstractly, to be able to form generalizations, to think about thinking, and to form values accordingly, it's going to happen now, during this 12 to 15 year span. If the values are to be formed based on social commitments, it's going to happen now, because socially, the growth is enormous. And it's not just the peer group, it's a feeling of personal destiny: "I have a future," for the first time, and this is very exciting. For the first time, an individual says, "I'm a person with a destiny of my own," but also says, "I'm a part of a generation." Now that's enormously exciting for society, and very important, how is that generation perceived, and what is the future of that generation perceived as being by the individual and by the group. So that there are these enormous changes going on: socially, biologically, intellectually, emotionally. And in fact, a young person is juggling a lot of ages. Sometimes, I call it the myth of homogeneity, and sometimes I like to call it the myth of chronological age, because to say that somebody is 13 years old, is to tell you just about nothing about that person. Because that person is juggling all of these different ages: social age, intellectual age, academic age, chronological age, physical age, and so forth; and it's a marvelous juggling act that this young person performs. We expect it all to be synchronized. It's not. These things are happening at very different ages within the individual, and yet we want sequential, synchronized, patterned growth, at the same time -- and that's intra-individual growth -- at the same time this enormous inter-individual variability. And we now -- I'm just talking about biological development -- a fast maturing girl can be sitting next to a more slowly developing boy -- biologically -- and there is a five to six year difference in age -- biological age -- between those two young people sitting in the same classroom. And that's just one variable.

And then if you put in all the other variables we've been talking about and how different they are within each individual, and therefore, all of the -- and you can imagine, you can draw a chart of all of the differences that you could get in the inter-individual variability. To say these kids are all alike, is just ridiculous! I mean, it is THE MYTH of the age group; and if we could breakdown that one myth, it would really be very constructive, because we wouldn't feel so much that "they're" out there, and that we're alone and isolated here. We wouldn't feel the inevitability of a generation gap. You see, the second you say, "They're all alike," it means we're different from them, and you immediately say there is a generation gap, and that the generation gap is inevitable.

We would also have to change our social structures. We'd have to.

If in fact we have a myth of chronogical age, we'd have to change the way we put people through school during this time. We would have to change the voluntary youth serving agencies, which deal with age groups and categories. The whole field of adolescent medicine would become a very exciting field. They just, anybody dealing as a professional, or as a parent, or as a friend , anybody in this age group, would start seeing how exciting these young people are.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz, author of Growing Up Forgotten, talking with reporter Barbara Bernhard of station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

BLAIR: This special five-part series on adolescence in America was developed by John Merrow, Jo Ellyn Rackleff, David Selvin, and Katharine Ferguson.

MERROW: Reports for this program came from Barbara Bernhard, member station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Carol Gable, WEPR, Clemson, South Carolina; Lloyd Gite, KERA, Dallas, Texas; Mark Poindexter, KCUR, Kansas City, Missouri; Diane Rehm, WAMU, Washington, D.C.; Tom Colvin in Baltimore, Maryland, and Jo Ellyn Rackleff, Pam Gouge, Susan Stamberg, and Connie Goldman in Washington, D.C.

BLAIR: You can purchase this set of five transcripts of this series on adolescence by sending $2.00 to National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. The five cassettes are also available for $25.00.

MERROW: A set of five transcripts also includes a bibliography of reference material about adolescence. The five transcripts cost $2.00. The five cassettes cost $25.00.

BLAIR: We also have a program guide with our schedule for the next three months, and a list of available back transcripts, that's free for the asking.

MERROW: Here's our address again: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C., 20036. Ask for Programs 92 through 96, and please, tell us the call letters of your NPR station.

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BLAIR: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is written and produced by John Merrow. The Assistant Producer is Katharine Ferguson; technical assistance by Al Freedman and Maury Schlesinger. I'm Wendy Blair.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and this is NPR -- National Public Radio.

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"PORTRAIT OF AMERICAN ADOLESCENCE"

PART III

MERROW: I'm John Merrow.

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair, and this week on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, we're continuing our series on adolescence in America, with a look at some of the institutions we've created to "handle" our young people.

* * *

TURANSKI: The adolescent age group is the group that has the highest degree of unemployment in the country.

SKLOVAR: I think more specifically, we've seen young people not find a lot of meaning in their own schooling. They don't like the structure; they don't find it natural for their own way of learning. They don't find content that deals with their real life concerns.

TEENAGER: I'm bored generally, but more so in school.

BRONFENBRENNER: They are the breeding grounds of alienation; the schools are the focus, the major focus in our society for vandalism and violence.

GILMAN: I want these kids to be stopped, but when I see what we do to stop them, I know that in the three, or four, or five, or six years when they come out of these institutions, they will be unstoppable.

TEENAGER: They have a lot of teachers that's just in for the money, not for whether it would benefit the kids, you know, and a lot of prejudices going on in school.

SKLOVAR: There are some schools that have a much higher percentage, informally, and it could be, you know, 48-50%. Sometimes we've got counsellors just telling us that they have seen that kind of truancy rate.

KOHLER: I don't think adults trust teens. I think we've had so much negative exposure, through the media too! I have a big gripe with the media for always telling the bad things: the crime, and all that, and not telling of these thousands of good things that happen.

LIPSITZ: So, obviously, what we start saying is that what we need is an entire re-conceptualization of the way we think about these young people, and about the way we serve them.

* * *

MERROW: Forty-one million young people between the ages of 12 and 21. We call them, or most of them, adolescents...

BLAIR: By which we mean that they're no longer children, really, but neither are they adults: they're in between.

MERROW: It's almost impossible to generalize about the time period known as adolescence, except to say that it's beginning earlier, for most kids, and lasting longer.

BLAIR: Puberty, one accepted indicator of the start of adolescence, now begins, on the average, as much as two years earlier than it did at the turn of the century.

MERROW: Formal education in high schools and colleges goes on longer. As a society, we need trained, educated workers, and training takes time.

BLAIR: But we apparently don't need as many trained workers as we're producing. Unemployment remains high.

MERROW: But we don't need untrained workers either, at least not as many as we have.

BLAIR: And, given a choice, employers apprently would rather hire a mature, stable, family man...

MERROW: ...or woman...

BLAIR: ...instead of a teenager.

MERROW: A lot of experts have pointed out to us that society is confused about its adolescents, and consequently, puts them into a "holding pattern," saying in effect, "Don't be impatient, wait your turn," and so forth.

BLAIR: Young people have always been impatient, but today, just as adolescence begins earlier, so apparently does impatience; and today's 14 year olds -- many of them -- are as impatient as yesterday's 16 year olds: impatient for school to end and work to begin.

MERROW: We've created a number of institutions to care for and to handle our adolescents for us: among them schools, juvenile courts, various special service organizations like drug counselling centers and VD clinics, and perhaps above all, the family.

BLAIR: For better or for worse, these institutions are being used today. Everyone has to go to school. One youth in nine ends up in juvenile court--one out of every six young males; the rate of admission to mental hospitals for children under 15 is increasing -- for every other age it's decreasing; and drop in centers and health clinics exist in most, if not all, urban centers.

MERROW: By now, everybody knows that the family as an institution is under attack: it's falling apart, it can't last we're told; but in fact, it is the family -- although sometimes a single parent family -- that cares for the young child before adolescence. Only when adolescence begins, do other institutions begin to play major roles.

FRAGMENTATION OF SOCIETY'S ATTENTION TO ADOLESCENTS

TIMPANE: Up through, say, grade school, it seems to me that the family and the school are in some sort of fairly comfortable tandem, in terms of caring for the child. But when the child goes to secondary education, and also

inevitably begins to leave the family fold, all of a sudden our society's attention to him fragments. The schools, the juvenile justice system, social welfare, no one has, no one feels they have responsibility for the whole child anymore, and the child sort of... not even the family, in a sense. I mean, most parents who are realistic, recognize that to some extent, their kids are living their own lives, even when they're in secondary schools, and that some other parts of society are going to have to take part of the responsibility for monitoring the child's behavior. It's beyond the family's control. And that monitoring is just fragmented, and no one is concerned about the child as a whole; and I think that, maybe at a very unconscious level, maybe the kid feels that.

BLAIR: That's Michael Timpane, author of a major study of adolescence. We'll hear more from him later.

MERROW: Schools are a logical place to begin our look at institutions for adolescents, because everybody has to go to school, at least till age 16.

BLAIR: Schools were established to help the family educate children, and to socialize the young. Today, as always, schools are being criticized: "High school graduates can't read their diplomas," and so forth.

MERROW: In fact, a recent study reveals that 40% of parents feel that schools can't be relied upon to teach children basic reading and writing.

BLAIR: Under particular attack these days are junior high schools. Critics call them "breeding grounds of alienation and crime," and worse. These critics are troubled by the junior high school's emphasis on order, and by its isolation.

MERROW: But schools have always been separated from the rest of society.

SCHOOLS: ARE THEY CLOSED COMMUNITIES?

KENISTON: You can build a wall around a little school, or build a wall around a big school. By and large, we build walls around all kinds of schools in this country.

BLAIR: Dr. Kenneth Keniston, Director of the Carnegie Council on Children, and author of All Our Children.

MERROW: Kenniston's criticism of schools is mild, however, compared to that leveled by other critics, many of whom feel that the way we have set up schools proves that we really don't like children.

BLAIR: Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University thinks that children and adolescents should be cared for by adults who have an irrational attachment to them: that is, by someone who loves them. By definition, schools can't love children, and individual teachers are capable of loving only a few students, not the 30 or the 130 students a teacher is responsible for.

DR. URIE BRONFENBRENNER

BRONFENBRENNER: American schools are very interesting institutions now. They are compounds outside the community, in which there's no regular commerce with the community: to get there you have to go on a special bus and have a special status--it's not even a public bus--and they are the breeding grounds of alienation. The schools are the focus, the major focus in our society for vandalism and violence. Every school now has a security budget and we keep trying to control it.

MERROW: We're talking about schools. Let's focus specifically on the

junior high school.

BRONFENBRENNER: That's exactly, of course, that's where vandalism and violence is at its peak, in the junior high school, and there's a reason for that. Because, you see, until a child is say about 12 years old, even though we are increasingly moving out of the lives of children as adults, nevertheless, when they're young, we still regard them as a kid and they need their parents, and so on. When a child goes into junior high school, then it's clear, you know, our responsibilities are now, sort of, we can lean back, the school's got them. Now senior high school, there begins to be a concern about what are they going to do when they graduate, the kids themselves are beginning to ask, "Where am I going," and there're some relationships developing, because you got to apply to college, you got to get recommendations, or you got to get a job, you got to get recommendations. So, senior high school sort of rebuilds connections for a little while, but in junior high school, you're in that "in between land," where you've moved out of the family, you're not about yet to move back into the world. And so you do have this isolated world of the teenage community, and it's very much as it was described in the Lord of The Flies, you know, the novel, of what happens when you get a bunch of kids together. Good kids, those were, you know, those were nice kids, but I think it's a very valid psychological description of what happens when, to the child who tries to hold to a sane standard of society -- he gets crushed!

BLAIR: Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University.

MERROW: That's a common theme: that just when our adolescents need the most attention and care, that's exactly when we stop concentrating on them!

BLAIR: After hearing all the criticism of schools -- they're cruel, mindless, dehumanizing, ineffective, and so forth -- you may be beginning to believe that they were created by people less intelligent, or at least less aware than we are today. But that's not necessarily so.

MERROW: In fact, comprehensive high schools -- those large educational "plants" offering lots of choices -- were set up because our predecessors knew that young people mature at different rates, and have different needs. Bringing young people together seemed to make sense.

OLD OPTIMISM -- NEW WISDOM

STIPEK: The 1950's, if you look at the literature, we were very optimistic as to what the high school could accomplish. It was going to really accomplish all the problems that adolescents had.

MERROW: That's Deborah Stipek, assistant professor of education at UCLA. She told me about earlier high hopes for the comprehensive high school, and the results.

STIPEK: What happened, subsequently, is we were very disappointed. These institutions didn't seem to be solving all the problems of transition from youth to adulthood, to use Coleman's phrase that he coined. Employers now are complaining that adolescents are getting to work and they aren't prepared for work, either in a kind of intellectual or skill way, but socially they haven't learned the kinds of social skills, or the kinds of attitudes that are important to function well in a work environment.

There are court cases that say that kids, not only are they not developing attitudes and that kind of thing that we expect high schools to teach them, but a lot of high school graduates don't know how to read very well. And I think this is probably more than anything else that brought to the public attention the fact that high schools may be failing in the promise we thought

they had. We have a lot of other expectations of the institution of high school: they are supposed to make good citizens out of high school students. And yet, in the mid-'60's, we saw high schools students, or adolescents, who didn't seem to be following what we perceived as "what good citizens should be doing." We saw a youth culture develop which, I think, frightened adults in many ways. Drugs and even the political activism, I think, probably frightened adults. So, our response now to high schools, and the negative response, the new conventional wisdom -- the high schools cannot help adolescents make that transition from childhood to adulthood--is just maybe an over-response to disappointment, and maybe our expectations were too high.

MERROW: You say the new conventional wisdom now, I think you're probably talking about those reports that came out in the early '70's, which were suggesting, among other things, that perhaps the school leaving age ought to be lowered to 14.

STIPEK: The school leaving age should be lowered to 14, that's one suggestion that's been made. Generally, I guess, one consensus that seems to have come from these reports, and from others who have studied how effective high schools are and what they seem to be doing, is that kids should get out into the work force at an earlier age, that their preparation for being workers is being thwarted by forcing them to remain in an academic environment, and that the sooner we can get kids into a work environment, the better.

MERROW: Deborah Stipek, assistant professor of education at UCLA. Perhaps young people should get out into the work place earlier, as some experts suggest, but as you'll hear later in this program, the work place doesn't have room for them.

BLAIR: Stipek has just finished reviewing recent studies of adolescence and schooling, including three major reports calling for large scale school reforms.

MERROW: Those three reports were called: "Youth: Transition to Adulthood," by James Coleman and others; "The Education of Adolescents," by John Henry Martin and others; and "The Reform of Secondary Education," by B. Frank Brown and others. Each was the product of a blue-ribbon panel.

BLAIR: The three reports are quite similar in their conclusions: they all recommend "dispersion," that is, get kids out of these big schools and into work experiences whenever possible.

MERROW: Other recommendations: let kids leave school at age 14, individualize the curriculum, modernize it, and make schools less rigid and bureaucratic.

BLAIR: Each report advocates giving students more say in their own educational lives. And all three agree that schools need to be changed drastically, and soon.

MERROW: Those three reports were issued in 1973 and 1974. In 1976, a fourth report appeared, saying that the first three had reached conclusions "not supported by facts given in evidence."

BLAIR: That fourth and most recent report called "Youth Policy in Transition," generally adopts a "hold your horses" attitude toward the reforms proposed in the earlier reports.

MERROW: Michael Timpane, principal author of the fourth report, says that the first three studied white, middle-class, male adolescents, and then

drew conclusions and made recommendations about all adolescents: female, poor, and minorities, as well as white.

DOES THE SITUATION CALL FOR SWEEPING REFORMS?

TIMPANE: I happen to think that most of the reforms that those reports espouse are probably worth trying, but the reports... It's looking behind the recommendations, looking at the lack of hard evidence, it seemed to us, to back up many of the contentions about what was and was not wrong, that first began to disturb my colleagues and I. And then we came to understand that more than anything else, those reports were bottomed on a set of values and a set of perceptions about what happened in the 1960's, rather than upon social science evidence. And I think that we really wanted to just warn people that, don't expect reports like making high schools smaller, or reforms like making high schools smaller, getting some kids out into the rest of society a little sooner, don't expect steps like that to somehow turn kids back into the neat, short-haired, be-tied, saddle-shoed, conformist kids of an earlier age. Don't expect that to remedy problems like unemployment in the cities. In general, don't expect a perfectly desirable reform to either overcome the effect of either long-term trends in our society, or to overcome the effects of very drastic historical events of the '60's, which caused a lot of our young people to act in a very outspoken, sometimes violent, way.

BLAIR: Michael Timpane, Deputy Director of the National Institute of Education and principal author of "Youth Policy in Transition." Timpane wants to experiment, and avoids endorsing any single proposal.

MERROW: But there are those who want drastic change in one or more aspects of our secondary schools: more time away from school, more responsibility, more emphasis on basic skills, more freedom, or more control.

BLAIR: Theodora Ooms, a psychotherapist and Deputy Director of The Family Impact Seminar at George Washington University, thinks adolescents should have more responsibility in school.

ADOLESCENTS SHOULD HAVE MORE RESPONSIBILITY

OOMS: Maybe what one should do, is begin to be less permissive about adolescence in general, but at the same time, ask more of them in terms of contributions, and giving them more of a sense of their place in the world. I mean, if you look at the average high school, the structure of the high school, it -- there's a friend of mine just enrolled her kid the other day -- there are 300 things that they CAN'T do, and in no place says what they CAN do. And I think society tries to hem adolescents around with all kinds of prohibitions, without really giving them a sense of what they can do that's constructive.

MERROW: Theodora Ooms, Deputy Director of The Family Impact Seminar in Washington, D.C., on the need for responsibility.

MARY CONWAY KOHLER

KOHLER: The biggest bottleneck really are the people without the vision.

MERROW: That's Mary Conway Kohler, a former judge and currently Executive Director of the National Commission on Resources for Youth. She believes in having young people tutor other young people, and in learning by experience.

KOHLER: If we can provide in the schools, from the earliest times the opportunity for what we call "youth participation," it's...the basis of it

is an experience where you have the responsibility...

FERGUSON: You the adolescent?

KOHLER: ...you the adolescent, carry the responsibility. Where you have the decision making. Now you're acting under someone's supervision, but he isn't saying -- suppose you were a tutor of a younger child -- he isn't saying, "Do you now, Johnny, today you give Susie, have Susie read from page three to six." To me, that isn't youth participation, because there's no challenge to him to find out where Susie is, and what she needs, and how he might best get it over to her. He might invent a game for her that would teach her to read without ever having a book in front of her, until she was already well equipped. We've seen that happen in the Youth Tutoring Youth Programs.

Then, I think also, it has to be something that affects another. You can have responsibility, and you can have decision making, but it can all be for your trip to Europe, or for something that just involves you. I think it ought to have some effect on other people, or other places.

MERROW: Mary Conway Kohler, Executive Director of the National Commission on Resources for Youth in New York City, talking with Katharine Ferguson. Kohler believes that some adults act as "gatekeepers," particularly those school principals and superintendents who don't believe in youth tutoring youth, or in experiential learning. They create bottlenecks to change, Kohler says. Another problem may be teachers who aren't trained to work with adolescents.

SCHOOLS DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE ADOLESCENT GROWTH PROCESS

LIPSITZ: It is really shocking to find out that people who are teaching young adolescents don't realize that if ever these students are going to learn to think about thinking, to form generalizations, it will be NOW! That one would assume that if anybody knew this, it would be the schools, and yet this central factor of growth is not known.

MERROW: That's Dr. Joan Lipsitz, a prominent researcher and adolescent psychologist, at the Learning Institute of North Carolina. When she talked to reporter Barbara Bernhard, Dr. Lipsitz was particularly critical of junior high schools which, she says, don't meet the needs of early adolescence.

LIPSITZ: Junior high school students sit! Now, if you walk into a junior high school classroom, they are the most squiggly, squirmy group of kids you've ever seen, and that's a control issue. Teachers make it into a control issue. "Sit up in your seat! Sit still!" In fact, if you take this one form of development -- the adolescent growth spurt -- and look at it, some of these kids are growing so quickly, and their bodies are changing so quickly, that they are literally incapable of sitting still. And yet, we impose upon them the most sedentary time in schooling, and create behavior problems as a result. What would happen if we took into account just that one seemingly irrelevant growth characteristic in schools and say we are going to revamp the structures of our school day--and we would have to in fact revamp the structure of the school--to meet this adolescent growth spurt. Well, aside from the fact that the water fountains would be placed higher, so that everybody wasn't bending over more, aside from that, the kids would have to be able to get up and move around. And the second kids get up and move around, the relationship between teacher and student changes, the whole authority structure changes, you have to start providing options. If they're moving, it means they're doing something, they're choosing something. Everything changes; the curriculum has to change, just by taking that one seemingly irrelevant growth characteristic into account.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz, author of Growing Up Forgotten, a study of early adolescence, talking with reporter Barbara Bernhard of station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

BLAIR: So, the experts are endorsing better teacher training, or less school and more work, or more freedom, or more responsibility. But what about adolescents themselves? Well, we know we can't generalize, but one view we found quite common is what might be called "reluctant acceptance."

WHAT SOME TEENAGERS THINK ABOUT SCHOOL

TEENAGER: For me, I feel sometimes, it's a waste of time and I fall asleep in class, or I don't go... whatever things like that happen.

MERROW: You mean that it is some sort of a game, but you're willing to play it cause your...

TEENAGER: I have to play it, you know. (laughs) I mean, it's the only way to survive. If you want to do well in this world, you have to pass their minimum requirements which are out there: going to school, doing well, dealing with people on certain levels, and things. You know, you just have to do those.

MERROW: Suppose you could design the ideal school for teenagers, what would it look like?

TEENAGER: I guess I'd have them small, cause like, in the city near ours, I've heard there's lots of fights because people don't know each other and everything else. And like where we go, the whole school, there's about 700 kids, and I think that's nice, where you can know practically everyone else, and there doesn't seem to be as many troublemakers that way. So I guess, I'd make it small.

BLAIR: "Keep schools small" is a cry that's being heard more and more often, but larger schools are usually less expensive, and cost is an important consideration. Larger schools also offer more choices for students, and choices -- more of them -- are recommended by most experts. Deborah Stipek, an assistant professor of education at UCLA, thinks there's a pendulum effect: that is, we try one reform, it doesn't work, and so we swing back and try another reform.

NEED FOR A 'SMORGASBORD' OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY

STIPEK: I guess, although now this really is my own opinion, and I'm not sure if it would be shared by my colleagues, that we need much more "smorgasbord" kind of educational policy, that we really do need to offer different things to different kids. And the problems with this are very signficiant, in fact they are the problems that we supposedly use a comprehensive high school to get away from, and that is when you start offering alternatives, you end up... which are supposedly equal, but different; they aren't really equal but different, some are better than others. And the fear of many of offering these kinds of alternative solutions to the needs to adolescents is that some adolescents -- white middle-class adolescents -- are going to stay in a very academic setting and prepare for college. Poor minority adolescents are going to be filtered into the alternative programs like vocational education, or learning skills, or on-the-job training, so that we're going, really almost about face, and going back to the more traditional and the more Western European policy of tracking kids into different kinds of life tracks. And unfortunately, I think there's fairly good reason to believe that the way we track them at this point in their lives is going to have a fairly important impact on where they're going to be later on in their lives.

MERROW: Deborah Stipek, an assistant professor at UCLA.

BLAIR: Earlier, Michael Timpane, principal author of a recent study of adolescence, criticized three previous studies of schooling and adolescence as being "too sweeping." The experts, Timpane suggests, were swept away by transitory phenomena, like the student protest movement of the '60's, and didn't pay enough attention to permanent conditions and long-term trends.

MERROW: Timpane is particularly critical of the recommendation that adolescents be released from school so they can work.

ARE JOBS THE ANSWER?

TIMPANE: The reports recommend earlier contact with work, for example. There's a romanticism of the work place in a lot of the reports, and...

MERROW: Work place education.

TIMPANE: That's right. And as one of the critiques of the report said, its title summed up the answer to that which said, "School is bad, work is worse." And so, I would ask the question, a young person who throws bricks at his school, what leads us to expect that he won't throw sand in the gears of his job?

BLAIR: Michael Timpane, principal author of "Youth Policy in Transition."

MERROW: Most adolescents won't even get the chance to"throw sand in the gears,"because they can't get jobs. The overall youth unemployment rate of 20% is three times the adult unemployment rate.

TEENAGERS TALK ABOUT EMPLOYMENT

TEENAGER: Jobs are very hard to find, especially, you know, when you're in school, it's hard to find part-time work to work around your schedule.

TEENAGER: Some of 'em sell dope. That's how they make their money without a job, and when their parents don't give them money.

TEENAGER: I feel that even a person with only a high school diploma should be able to get some sort of job. They would readily hire him, before they'd hire somebody without.

TEENAGER: I think now that working is just part of a change of life. It's something that they do just naturally, like something, you know, they were grown up to do. Working is a part of their teenage life.

MERROW: The burden of joblessness, and the frustration, poverty and despair that may accompany it, are borne disproportionately by non-white young people. Only about 14% of job-seeking young whites are unemployed, but among young blacks, the figure is 37%.

BLAIR: When adolescents do find work, it's most often what Harvard economist Richard Freeman calls scornfully, "Macdonald's jobs."

GENUINE DILEMNA: NO JOBS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

MACDONALD'S EMPLOYEE: We order the same things. We greet our customers, we fill their orders, we take their money, and "Have a nice day."

LESH: The youth I have seen today want to work. They don't want to

be on welfare, or some other kind of assistance. However, they also don't want "scut" work.

BLAIR: Seymour Lesh, of the National Child Labor Committee.

MERROW: We're on the horns of a genuine dilemma: school reformers want to get young people out of school and into the work place, but there aren't enough jobs to go around. Many adult workers, and their unions, don't want the competition, and they suspect that employers would gladly hire young people at lower wages, just to save money.

BLAIR: Recently, the U.S. Senate rejected a so-called "youth wage," a sub-minimum wage for young people. And in fact one hurdle for those who want more jobs for young people is child labor laws.

MERROW: Seymour Lesh of the National Child Labor Committee says we must distinguish between child labor, which exploits young people -- poor working conditions and low pay -- and children's work, which would be safe and beneficial. Lesh told Katharine Ferguson that the child labor laws leave children too well protected, and the result is they can't get any jobs at all.

BLAIR: Lesh also says that state laws regarding the employment of young people are either outmoded or contradictory. He'd like to see a youth advocate in the President's cabinet, and a full employment policy with public service jobs for young people.

SUGGESTIONS ON WAYS OF CREATING JOBS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

LESH: One of our recommendations has to do with the emphasis on a full employment policy for the entire country, and under that, a separate category of jobs which are earmarked for youth, so that they don't have to compete with other categories of workers for jobs, and can get the kind of experience they need to plan their life futures.

FERGUSON: Ok, what would be an example of an area where a young person, say 15, wouldn't be competing with a 28 year-old adult with two kids?

LESH: Well, one of the areas might be in the whole legal messenger field, which is now predominated by retired people. I don't want to put down the older adults too, because that would create further competition, but this kind of thing, where they can get exposed to a profession, where they can learn about many other things that lawyers deal with, and visit in the course of their work other kinds of employing situations to get some idea of what they might want to do at a later period of time. There are a host of other jobs, particularly in the, opening up in the whole environmental area: the need for conservation in many ways, in terms of our parks, and playgrounds, and streams, and rivers. A great deal needs to be done. There is money going to be put into that area by the federal government and by the states, and it's still wide open in many areas for youth to move into. And that could be a definite preserve of youth.

BLAIR: Seymour Lesh of the National Child Labor Committee, talking with Katharine Ferguson. Lesh thinks that the government should provide jobs for every young person who wants to work.

MERROW: Lawrence Steinberg, an adolescent researcher who teaches at Cornell University, agrees with Seymour Lesh that there are jobs which adolescents could do without taking work away from adults.

STEINBERG: Adolescents, when you press them -- and I've talked with many of them about it -- would love to have more important and more responsible things to do with their time than sit in study halls in high schools. And I think there are a lot of things that need to be done in society that adolescents could do very well.

MERROW: Like what?

STEINBERG: Oh, like staffing day care centers, like helping elderly,or disabled people who need help with things.

MERROW: But you're taking jobs away from people.

STEINBERG: Not if you create jobs for them. That is, I think, you have a market of people who will work in that sense, not for money,but in place of sitting through some sorts of Latin courses. And I think Latin is important, but I think other things are important too. So that you can create the positions, I think, which would take the place of certain percentage of school hours. So, in that sense, you wouldn't be hurting people who needed jobs. You would be taking tasks that we might not have the money to hire people to do, and letting people who might really benefit from having the responsibilities do them.

BLAIR: Lawrence Steinberg of Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

MERROW: The experts tell us, and adolescents seem to agree, that most young people want to work; but we're also told, there aren't enough jobs, there are child labor laws, or the young people are so poorly trained that they can't follow simple directions.

BLAIR: Seymour Lesh of the National Child Labor Committee believes society is paying a high price for youth unemployment: frustration, despair and crime.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: FRUSTRATION, DESPAIR AND CRIME

LESH: Once you make jobs available, youth will work. It's when there are few jobs available, and youth have hit their head on the wall a number of times getting turned down, or turned away, that they give up: and so you develop an attitude which is anti-social, anti-community, anti-neighborhood, anti-government. And as a result, you get more anti-social behavior: that is, the ripping off of other people and property, the lack of care about other people, and as they grow older, the lack of interest in assuming citizenship responsbilities.

BLAIR: Seymour Lesh of the National Child Labor Committee, talking with Katharine Ferguson.

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MERROW: Young people want to work, and if they can't find work, some get money in other ways, including crime. A lot of the crime actually occurs in the schools, as we'll learn later in this OPTIONS IN EDUCATION Program.

TEENAGER: Any juvenile commits a crime it's either for an act of attention, or for the fact that they feel that they're doing something wrong, that their life is so messed up that they need some help. And they're looking for it, they just don't know how to get it any other way.

SKLOVAR: All statistics do prove that institutionalized youths do tend to remain in the criminal justice system.

TEENAGER: Some kids just can't cope with that middle class kind of a life, whatever it is, you know.

TURANSKI: I think we still have a lot to learn about adolescents, but I don't know that putting them in jail is the way our general system is right now is necessarily an answer. I don't think it provides an alternative.

POLIVKA Diversion, whether it's to services or to programs or just home again, is, as far as the vast majority of the children coming into the juvenile justice system are concerned, is superior to processing them on through the system. Certainly, superior to placing them in institutions, and a lot less expensive.

TEENAGER: The only crime that I can see is like if you get raped or mugged in a subway while you're going to your classes. (Laughs)

KOHLER: I never handled a case in those 17 years where I felt that everything that could have been done for that child by the public who was responsible for him had been done.

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BLAIR: Everywhere we go we hear that youth crime is skyrocketing, that young people, particularly young males, are responsible for a large portion of the serious crimes: the murders, rapes, felonious assaults, arson and burglary.

MERROW: What portion? Well, we've heard anywhere from 30% to over half. We do know that while crime has been declining over the past two or three decades, the juvenile arrest rate has jumped 140% since 1960. There's been a 400% increase in juvenile arrests for violent crimes over that same time period. But arrests don't necessarily mean either guilt or conviction.

BLAIR: David Gilman is Executive Director of the Juvenile Justice Standards Project, sponsored by the American Bar Association and the Institute of Judicial Administration. Gilman told us that the statistics about juvenile crime are "political and, therefore, unreliable." Gilman says the public is being "played like a cello." He also says that FBI reports are unreliable, that school authorities exaggerate crime in order to scare the public into giving them more money, and that the definition of juvenile varies. All these things make reports about juvenile crime "unreliable," he says.

MERROW: Whatever the truth, the public seems to believe that adolescent crime is skyrocketing, and that young offenders should be punished more severely.

BLAIR: But the experts tell us that very few young people actually commit serious criminal offenses. JoEllyn Rackleff talked with Theodora Sklovar, Communications Director of the New York State Division of Youth Services.

YOUTH AND VIOLENT CRIME

SKLOVAR: Clearly, there are some young people, unfortunately I mean, who need to be removed, and do need to be placed in an institutional setting. It doesn't have to be an institutional setting with 400 other kids. I mean it can be a small setting where they can get individualized attention, and they can get -- very often which is required -- psychological assistance, psychiatric assistance as well, remedial work, which is required. But that we're saying that we have developed a system now that should really be able to deal with both. And I think it's also very important to note that there is no question

out of most of the youth who are placed with us, the amount that have committed the more violent crimes is a very, very small percentage, and that is what everybody dwells on. I'm not saying it isn't shocking, and I'm not saying it isn't important and that we must do something about it; but what most people will not deal with is that most of the youth who are in trouble have not committed really serious, violent crimes.

MERROW: Theodora Sklovar of the New York State Division of Youth Services, talking with JoEllyn Rackleff.

BLAIR: Young people who do commit serious crimes are brought into the juvenile justice system, which was created as an alternative to the adult system. The idea was, and is, to emphasize rehabilitation: to give young offenders another chance.

MERROW: Reporter JoEllyn Rackleff asked Theodora Sklovar what happens to a 15 year-old who's caught stealing a car.

RACKLEFF: I just stole a car and I'm 15 and I get caught and I go to court, or I get caught and I get taken by a policeman to jail. What happens?

SKLOVAR: All righty. Depending on which precinct you are brought to, and depending on the offense. It may be that if it's a lesser offense, you would be given a time to appear in family court, and if there's an adult in the home, you would be sent home, and then you would show up in family court that day.

RACKLEFF: So right away, if I'm 15 and I don't have... I have a mother that works and nobody can be reached, and I get let out on my own recognizance, or whatever it's called, I might not come back. So I might not get to court. If it's my first time, I might get away with it, and I might get away with it for several times.

SKLOVAR: I think that's true. I mean, without question that is true.

RACKLEFF: Suppose they decide to keep me there, then what happens?

SKLOVAR: All righty. Now if it is a more serious crime, and even if there is a family but it is a more serious crime, you are placed in a detention center. And these are not run by us, these are run again by the local municipalities. We have some input and we do pay some of the bills, so we do have criteria, and we work with these programs. You are placed in detention and then you are brought before a family court judge.

RACKLEFF: How long might that be?

SKLOVAR: Well, I must say they have them moving much more quickly. They really have. I don't think that you would find -- again I can only speak about New York State -- but I don't think you would find a youth in a detention program, at this point, more than three weeks. And it is really a problem. That youth who are institutionalized have less of a chance of ever being able to return to society and make it in society.

MERROW: Theodora Sklovar of the New York State Division of Youth Services, talking with JoEllyn Rackleff.

BLAIR: The juvenile justice system was created, in part, to keep real criminals -- that is the adults -- separate from young, presumably impressionable offenders. Ironically, serious criminals are found in the juvenile justice system today, but they're 14, 15 and 16 years old.

MERROW: And they're put into institutions for juveniles along with what are called "status offenders," that is, young people who have done things that wouldn't be crimes if the kids were older: like being truant from school, or disobeying a parent, or staying out after curfew.

SOME PROBLEMS WITH THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

GILMAN: They may suffer from physical assaults, from sexual assaults, from isolation from family, from disruption of any kind of positive social life. They will suffer all the indignities that is usually associated with the adult criminal prison system.

BLAIR: David Gilman, Director of the Juvenile Justice Standards Project. Gilman says that girls are more likely to be guilty of "status crimes" than boys.

GILMAN: The statistics are that about 70% of the girls who are institutionalized for "status offenses," that 70% of the girls who are institutionalized are "status offenders," and that of that 70%, about 50% are first offenders.

MERROW: In other words, they may have been doing something like hanging around with boys, or disobeying their mother and father?

GILMAN: That's right, or just being in total conflict with their parents.

MERROW: Let me get those numbers again, 70% of the girls who are imprisoned, who are institutionalized in some way, are "status offenders." Half of that 70% are first time offenders.

GILMAN: That's right.

MERROW: There's no warning, it's just right into the clink.

GILMAN: Well, there may have been warnings, but there was never an adjudicated charge, you know. But the figures are also high for boys.

MERROW: That's what I was going to ask you.

GILMAN: About 23% of the boys who are insitutionalized are there for "status offences," but it has to do with a double standard in terms of sexuality. In other words, boys can be boys, and girls should be virgins.

BLAIR: David Gilman, Director of the Juvenile Justice Standards Project in New York City. He and other experts we talked to told us that juvenile crime isn't out of control, even though the public may believe that it's skyrocketing. Some experts want serious juvenile offenders kept separate from "status offenders," and from petty juvenile offenders.

MERROW: But it's not just a matter of sending the serious juvenile offenders to the "Big House," that is putting them in jail with adult criminals, according to Larry Polivka of Florida's Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services. He says more emphasis should be placed on reforming the system to deal with both status and serious offenders.

SOME SUGGESTED REFORMS

POLIVKA: I would like to see much more participation on the part of attorneys representing the juvenile. I would like to see rules of evidence

applied much more rigorously in ways comparable to the way they're applied in the adult court, and then let the court deal with the serious offender in a way that is more in line with the way that the criminal court operates. And in terms of sentencing, maybe the sentences should be somewhat harsher than they are now, that is, children should stay longer. At the same time, though, I think it's important that those children -- the serious offenders -- remain in the juvenile justice system. The failures of the adult system are clear to everyone, they're worse than the juvenile system, so why simply compound the error by placing these children in an adult system. And we should reserve our institutions and our community programs for these serious offenders and improve the services in those institutions as well. By lowering the population of them, by getting the non-serious offender out -- and in most states, non-serious offenders make up the majority of the population,in my mind,in these institutions and programs -- by getting them out, you'll actually have more in the way of resources. I don't want to cut staff there, but you'll have more, if you maintain that staff who have resources to deal with the serious offender for a longer period of time. And I think the results will be better, much better than what we have now.

MERROW: Larry Polivka of the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services in the state of Florida, talking with JoEllyn Rackleff.

BLAIR: Violence and vandalism are serious problems, particularly in urban schools. Rape, attempted rape, assaults on teachers, burglaries, robberies, and drug and alcohol offenses are all increasing alarmingly. In 1975, for instance, assaults by students on teachers jumped more than 75%.

ARE SCHOOLS THE SOURCE OF ALIENATION?

TIMPANE: Is the school a particular source of alienation, or is the school just part of the fabric of society?

BLAIR: Michael Timpane, whom we've heard from before, asks the question that everyone raises. Timpane's answer, and the answer put forth by many experts, is that the schools are a convenient target for general anger and frustration.

MERROW: If you're a teacher, or a principal, or a student who's been assaulted, that answer may not make much difference.

BLAIR: But what may seem an obvious solution -- kick the offenders out of school--doesn't solve the problem. Merely transfers it to some other institution. Making it someone else's problem has been a popular approach, apparently, and one result has been the emergence of "drop-in" centers and other comprehensive adolescent social welfare institutions.

MERROW: That may be too fancy a name. They're really places where kids who've been rejected everywhere else can go and get some help. They exist in urban centers everywhere, from "Dial-A-Teen," to large free clinics like The Door in Manhattan, in New York City. The Door serves over 400 young people ages 12 to 21 everyday. Trained professionals -- some salaried, some volunteer -- provide free medical and gynecological services, family planning and sex counselling, nutrition counselling, psychiatric help, and social and legal services. JoEllyn Rackleff got a guided tour of The Door from its Director, Dr. James Turanski.

THE DOOR

RACKLEFF: There are a bunch of kids sitting around looking at a film strip, what's going on here?

TURANSKI: This is the waiting room for the health center, and most of these young people will be waiting to be seen for a physical examination. And because many of the young people come for sex-related problems -- be it birth control, venereal disease, pregnancy diagnosis -- we often have "rap sessions" and films in the area of sexuality. And so that's, that's a film which will then be followed by a "rap" group led by one of the family planning counselors.

RACKLEFF: Ok.

TURANSKI: This is the health center where we give the family planning, sex counselling, general medical services, nutrition counselling, and also have the lab and the pharmacy. Then, over there, is the psychiatric counselling area. Over here is social services. There is legal counselling in the blue...

RACKLEFF: What legal problems do teenagers have?

TURANSKI: Well, a lot of them have questions about their legal rights. Some have criminal problems, some have civil problems. A large number of them have difficulty with housing because, up to a certain age, you can't get an apartment, etc., so they ask advice from the lawyers.

RACKLEFF: They get it free?

TURANSKI: That's right. Some of the young people have problem getting welfare, and we've got a case of a young woman today who was having difficulty getting on to welfare, even though she is in her ninth month of pregnancy. And so, it's like through that we're able to facilitate them getting the help that they need.

BLAIR: Dr. James Turanski, Director of The Door, a youth center in New York City, talking with JoEllyn Rackleff.

MERROW: We're left with several problems and lots of proposed solutions. We might analyze it this way: on reaching adolescence, a young person no longer has a single caretaker, like the family. Instead, a number of institutions, some connected, some separate, take responsibility: the school, juvenile court, youth organizations like the scouts, and a number of helping agencies like health clinics, job referral agencies, VD centers and so forth.

BLAIR: All were begun, at one time or another, to solve a problem: the schools to socialize and educate, which the family needed help with; the juvenile courts to punish, rehabilitate, and distinguish between youth and adult criminals; and VD clinics and the like were set up to handle specific problems.

MERROW: In a way, it seems as if each solution creates new problems. The comprehensive high school which was supposed to give kids lots of choice and room to grow is now under attack because it's too big and not very effective.

BLAIR: Critics attack the juvenile justice system because it's bringing together hardened young criminals and petty offenders.

MERROW: But what about solutions? What kind of institutions can we create that will help adolescents make it through to adulthood, that will produce responsible, productive adults, that will get them into the work place with good jobs--which is where most young people seem to want to be?

BLAIR: You've heard a number of solutions. Let them work now. Full employment would solve everything.

MERROW: But there aren't enough jobs, and there won't be.

BLAIR: Loosen up the school. Create alternative schools, or "experiential learning," or youth tutoring youth.

MERROW: That works best for the kids who need it least, but the delinquent kids have to be watched closely, and kept in school.

BLAIR: Reform the juvenile justice system by letting society worry about the "status offenders" and the petty criminals. Leave only the serious juvenile offenders to the system.

MERROW: But who wants any juvenile delinquents out on the streets! They'll just cause trouble.

BLAIR: And so it goes. Institutional solutions just don't seem to work for our adolescents.

MERROW: Perhaps that's the problem: the fact that we keep trying to find a uniform bureaucratic solution to all our problems. Maybe we have to think small, think individually, or just think in terms of small programs that address a specific problem.

BLAIR: Michael Timpane, principal author of a report on adolescence, says we have to move carefully and slowly.

REFORMS SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED SLOWLY AND CAREFULLY

TIMPANE: People speak about youth advocacy programs, people speak about integrating services into larger groups, larger groupings that are oriented at various target groups like youth. I'm not sure that there's an institutional solution, because the thrust of the reports is that our previous institutional solutions aren't working. And it seems to me a little bit ironic to propose institutional solutions, when part of the reason that they haven't worked in the past is that they become bureaucratized and inflexible.

MERROW: But one of the things that is happening, it seems to me, is that the family is very much back in "vogue." If there's a pendulum working here, the pendulum has swung back in favor of strengthing the family. Jimmy Carter talked about it in his inaugural. There's a lot of attention to that. Maybe that's the drift that you would like to see.

TIMPANE: I think it's a very... it's an issue that's very fundamental to society. If there's no source, if there's no source of values, and if there's no source of, sort of fundamental, you know, guidance, and no source of meaning, then the way we arrange what we call services is never going to, you know, be at the base... is never going to be the basic solution to things. So, if it's the family, or if it's some new modified familial, or communal arrangement, whatever it is, I can't see, history suggests to me that the family seems to survive all reports of its demise, and it seems to me to be a so natural and irreducible a unit of society that there always will be a "family." Yeah, I think that it's at that level that young people -- all people -- get their fundamental signals about life. And if those signals are not clear, not understood, and don't have meaning, then nothing else we're going to do is going to help sort things out for the kid.

MERROW: At the same time as there's increased emphasis on families, there are some, let me call them signs of change, that we're stopping our prolongation of youth. We're going to let kids break away earlier. I'm referring to Early Exit Programs in high school, where kids can take a test

at 15, or 16, or 14 even, to try to get out of school. If they pass the test, they can be given a special certificate, and they no longer have to go to school. There's a tendency in juvenile justice systems to say,"Hey, that 13 year old ought to be given an adult sentence. That kid did an adult crime, killing those three people. Let's not pretend that he's a juvenile." So maybe those are signs that, in fact, the prolongation period, the prolongation of adolescence is coming to an end.

TIMPANE: Well, or simply that we realize the inflexibility of the set of structures that we built, and that.... One of the consequences of educating everyone highly, is that we have made them skillfull and capable of choice. And so all of our institutions have to adjust to that reality which they have themselves created. I mean, that's one of the paradoxes in the situation. And sure, the flat rules that apply to everyone, when you get to this age group, fewer and fewer all the time, and a much more situational and flexible approach by all of our institutions serving this age group, I think, is essential. And that, I think, is what many of these reforms, and the ones you mentioned, are pointing toward.

BLAIR: Michael Timpane, Deputy Director of the National Institute of Education, and principal author of "Youth Policy in Transition."

MERROW: Next week on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, we'll be focusing on the family, and on how adolescents grow and develop within their families.

BLAIR: We hope you'll join us.

* * *

BLAIR: This special five part series on adolescence in America was developed by John Merrow, JoEllyn Rackleff, David Selvin and Katharine Ferguson.

MERROW: Reports for this program came from Barbara Bernhard, station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Gail Pellet in New York City; and JoEllyn Rackleff in Washington, D.C.

* * *

BLAIR: You may purchase this set of five transcripts of this series by sending $2.00 to National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. The five cassettes are also available for $25.00.

MERROW: The set of five transcripts also contains a bibliography of reference material about adolescence. The five transcripts cost $2.00. The five cassettes are $25.00.

BLAIR: If you've written to us already, and many listeners have, please be patient. This was program three in the five part series, and the transcripts won't be mailed until the series is completed.

MERROW: We also have a program guide free for the asking with our schedule for the next three months. It also lists available transcripts from previous OPTIONS IN EDUCATION programs.

BLAIR: Here's our address again: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. Ask for Programs No. 92 through 96, "Adolescence in America."

MERROW: And please, tell us the call letters of your NPR station.

* * *

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MERROW: Principal support for the series is provided by the National Institute of Education. Other funds are provided by Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

BLAIR: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is written and produced by John Merrow. The assistant producer is Katharine Ferguson.

* * *

BLAIR: Technical assistance by Chip Fetrow and Bob Nock I'm Wendy Blair.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and this is NPR -- National Public Radio.

* * *

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OPTIONS IN EDUCATION

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A WEEKLY SERIES BROADCAST BY
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"PORTRAIT OF AMERICAN ADOLESCENCE"

PART IV

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and this week National Public Radio's OPTIONS IN EDUCATION looks at the family, and how adolescents grow and develop within their families.

* * *

FATHER: When we were first married, I was terrified at the whole notion of having children for the simple reason that I, I didn't know how I could ever raise a teenager. I don't have any of those feelings now.

MOTHER: There were times that I wondered if I had done something wrong, you know, in the way I tried to bring them up and.... I don't know, I feel now that maybe it wasn't that, and I guess that takes a load off my mind too. I couldn't figure out what it was or, you know, or anything, but I just figured I spoiled some where. You know, I must have gone wrong, you know.

TEENAGER: Guess I'm pretty lucky about it, about being able to go back home to my mother. She could've said you wanted to live with your father, now work it out with him. She could have said that, but she didn't. She understood what was going on. So, I'm going back and I'm sure we're going to have a lot to talk about.

MAN: I would have to say, and I'm not being facetious, that I don't have many friends that aren't being divorced. I think it's by far the rule rather than the exception. And we can point to, oh, only a handful of couples that we have known for some time that are still married, are still the same nuclear family unit.

WOMAN: I think we're going to settle down to some new forms of marriage in which people don't have children, unless they really intend to stay together. They don't have children first and think about it afterwards. They think about it first before they have children.

* * *

BLAIR: The family. By now most everyone is familiar with the notion that the family is outmoded, out of date and falling apart under pressure.

MERROW: But rumors of its demise may be unfounded, or at least exaggerated. After all, there's a self-proclaimed family advocate in the White House.

BLAIR: That's right. Jimmy Carter said in his inaugural address, "I

join in the hope that when my time as your President has ended, people might say this about our nation: that we had strengthened the American family, which is the basis of our society."

MERROW: Whether families are getting weaker or stronger, we can't say, but our research for this special series on adolescence in America has convinced us that the family, as an institution, has a more profound and longer lasting impact on adolescents than does anything else in their lives.

BLAIR: Of course schools leave their mark. After all, every child goes to school, but only for a few hours a day, five days a week, with summers off.

MERROW: One out of nine adolescents eventually ends up in the juvenile justice system, and that leaves permanent marks as well. But eight out of nine adolescents never see juvenile court.

BLAIR: Many adolescents join youth groups: church, scouts and so forth. But what happens in those voluntary organizations builds upon the basic foundation of the family.

MERROW: If the foundation isn't there, or if it's unsteady, the adolescent may end up in a runaway house, a teenage pregnancy clinic, or a mental hospital. But once again, the family is where it all starts.

BLAIR: There probably are as many kinds of families as there are varieties of adolescents: that is, it's as hard to generalize about the family as it is to make sweeping statements about the 41 million young people between the ages of 12 and 21.

MERROW: One generalization about the time period known as adolescence does seem to stand up: it's beginning earlier for most kids, and lasting longer than it used to.

BLAIR: And because adolescence begins earlier these days, so do the problems of adolescence: the teenage pregnancy, the drinking and drug abuse, sexual experimentation, venereal disease, and teenage crime.

MERROW: But for most young people, earlier adolescence simply means earlier changes, stresses and strains. It means that kids begin pressuring and testing their parents not at 14 or 15, but at 12 or 13.

BLAIR: And it may mean that they need their parents, or other adult role models,in a different way at an earlier age. But they do need adult role models.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz of the Learning Institute of North Carolina told Barbara Bernhard that family life is crucial for adolescents.

ADOLESCENTS NEED ADULT ROLE MODELS

LIPSITZ: A really interesting need that they have is a need for adults, a need for models. When they are asked -- and I'm talking about a really interesting study that looked at people who are in voluntary youth serving agencies, like 4-H Clubs, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts; people who are not; and people who are incarcerated -- they all -- and these are very, very different kids -- they all talked about the importance of a significant adult. It could be a mother -- it was most often a mother -- sometimes a father, sometimes an aunt or grandmother. Unfortunately, rarely a teacher. But the need! If they

were asked, "Who is the most important person in your life?", it was an adult. And for those who were incarcerated, interestingly enough, they would say that they wished they had been an adult in many cases. So that in fact, the peer group comes second. That is a...the need for a model in an adult is enormous.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz, author of Growing Up Forgotten, talking with Barbara Bernhard of station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

BLAIR: For most adolescents, the primary adult role models are provided by parents.

MERROW: But there may only be one parent living at home. That's the case in one-sixth of American families today.

BLAIR: And family life is changing: half of the work force is women, which means that mother isn't necessarily at home any more.

MERROW: And for every five marriages this year, there have been three divorces; and so far, there have been fewer marriages this year than last.

BLAIR: Nevertheless, some kind of family life is the norm, and the parent is the primary role model.

MERROW: Just what do parents do? What is the family's job? Well, it's supposed to feed, clothe, protect, educate and discipline its young.

BLAIR: Teaching discipline is a job that most parents are uncomfortable with and uncertain about.

MERROW: For instance, should you spank? And if so, at what age do you stop spanking? When the kid is bigger than you are? And which parent is going to be the disciplinarian, the mother or the father?

A SUBURBAN MARYLAND FAMILY'S VIEW OF DISCIPLINE

BARNETT: Are you a very harsh disciplinarian?

FATHER: No

FAMILY: Oooooh, dad. Awwwwww, dad. Ooooooooooooooooooh. (Groans and laughter in the background)

FATHER: Well I guess you can tell from that that I'm not a very harsh disciplinarian. (Laughs)

MERROW: You're listening in on a conversation at the home of a family living in a Maryland suburb near Washington, D.C.

BLAIR: Reporter Carolyn Barnett spent several weeks with them -- the mother, father, and their three adolescent children, ages 17, 15 and 14. We asked Barnett to find out about their life together, and about the things that are important to them as a family -- like discipline.

FATHER: They, they attempt to, to make it appear, you know, that I am harsh, you know. But mostly what I do is, I talk to them, you know.

BARNETT: Tell the truth now, is he really that hard on you?

(Silence) (Laughter)

FATHER: (Laughs) I couldn't hear that, Sheila!

DAUGHTER: I didn't say anything -- yet.

FATHER: That's what I said, I couldn't hear it.

DAUGHTER: Well, actualmente, he is sort of "long-winded." (Laughs) Cause when he gets on a subject like, if you get ir trouble and he starts talking about...

SON: ...like when you break the window!

DAUGHTER: ...it, and talking about it, and talking about it. Don't you dad?

SON: And we write stuff on the blackboard.

FATHER: Well now, isn't that better than something...

DAUGHTER: The way you USED TO DO IT!

FATHER: ...harsher...

DAUGHTER: You used to go out....

BARNETT: Well maybe he's treating you like an adult, you know, when an adult...

SON: Stick out your hand! Ow!

BARNETT: Just your hand! (laughter)

SON: That doesn't tickle?

MOTHER: Honey, you'd better pull down your britches!

BARNETT: That's right!

MOTHER: That's right!

MERROW: We'll be hearing more from that family later in the program. They were interviewed for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION by Carolyn Barnett.

BLAIR: A lot of families want help with questions of discipline. According to a report by the General Mills Corporation, "Raising Children in a Changing Society," 36% of families surveyed would welcome advice on how to discipline effectively.

MERROW: That same study reveals that most fathers like to think of themselves as the disciplinarians in the family, and also as the more patient parent. In fact, however, the mother is usually both, according to the General Mills study.

BLAIR: Discipline doesn't simply mean punishment, of course. It's often a system of rewards and punishments; and for parents who have thought about ends and goals, the end goal is probably a self-disciplined child.

MERROW: Today, you can buy books about "creative discipline" or the "dangers of permissiveness." The underlying message is that kids need

boundaries, and it's the parents' job to define them, or at least help define them.

ADOLESCENTS NEED PARENTS TO DEFINE BOUNDARIES

LIPSITZ: Another need is that we have to start knowing how to react appropriately. Kids need, at this time, a good deal of latitude within safe boundaries.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz, author of Growing Up Forgotten, says that parents may provide boundaries without knowing it.

LIPSITZ: I have certainly heard my own children say on the telephone, "Oh no, I can't do that, my mother would never let me." And I'm standing there saying, "What do you mean, I would never let you. I'm not an authoritarian." And then I realize that this is a way of hiring me as a police officer, a way of allowing my child to stand against the peer group with something that he or she may not feel comfortable with yet. Maybe some of the.... Because of this great variability in growth, some of their friends are ready for things that they're not ready for. And when they say, "No, my mother would never let me do it," that's a signal to me.

There's another issue here also, which is that, I see a lot of... a parallel between being a toddler and being a young adolescent: this tremendous growth spurt, the growth along so many dimensions, the testing out behavior. We talk about the "terrible twos" and the "terrible teens." But in fact, we're quite proud: we're physically exhausted by the "terrible twos," but we're quite proud, because what we're really saying is, my child knows how to say no -- which means my child knows how to talk -- my child knows how to walk -- if he or she is climbing all over the cabinets, look at this "virtuosity." And also, I can go to the sandbox, or the swings, and say, "This kid's driving me crazy," and I can share some information. By the time my child has become a young adolescent, I am much more isolated. There's no longer the "community of mothers" at the sandbox, or the day care center that's giving me some pretty good feedback, if it's a good day care center, about what my child is doing. If I feel in trouble, I tend to take this -- and of course, I'm generalizing, my I is a generalized I for parents in general -- I tend to take this as a personal failure. I don't really want to talk about it. I feel very isolated with it. In fact, if I turn to another parent and say I have this problem, the parent will probably say, "Uh, I know what you mean," and there would be a sharing of despair, but not of information.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz of the Learning Institute of North Carolina, talking with reporter Barbara Bernhard of station WUNC Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

BLAIR: And so,says Lipsitz, it's harder to bring up adolescents because parents have to "go it alone."

MERROW: We have a frozen image of the family: a kind of Norman Rockwell portrait of a hard-working father, a happy homemaker mother, and well-scrubbed, mischievous -- but not bad -- kids. And even if most of us know the image is a false one, I'll bet a lot of us still feel guilty about failing to live up to it.

* * *

SOME THOUGHTS ON FAMILY LIFE

TEENAGER: Family's boring. Nothing's happening. Just sit around the house all day. My mother, she doesn't have a job. She just stays around the house.

MOTHER: Yes, I've always spent a lot of time with them, and I think this

is primarily because of my background. I was a child of divorced parents, and I lived with relatives.

TEENAGER My brother's gone half the time. He's working, or at school, wrestling, football, all this other mess. My sister, she's on the phone all day.

MOTHER: I didn't have my own immediate family, and I suppose this is why I spend so much time with my youngsters.

* * *

MERROW: We're back again with our reporter Carolyn Barnett and the Maryland family she visited. They're the kind of family we might like to think of as "typical": the parents are still married to each other, the kids are at home, school is important, religion is a source of strength, and the church itself is a social center.

SOME PROBLEMS THE 'TYPICAL' FAMILY FACE

MOTHER: We move around so rapidly. The average family moves... statistically I don't know the number, but I know so much more than the family did before. So, when you're moving into a new neighborhood and you don't know the people in the community, they're moving, and there are so many other distractions that you just don't have the close family ties that you had before. So, you find a lot of the cohesiveness and the intimacy and the togetherness is disappearing.

FATHER: I think another part of it too is the fact that there are so many different activities that people have to participate in. As I mentioned earlier, the church was the center of all activities when we were growing up. But now, even families, you know, many times they are going in different directions just within the family; and whereas now... well, for example in our neighborhood, you know, you work in one area, and everybody else you know is going different directions as far as work goes. And then, as far as entertainment goes, you're going in different directions: people have TV and you don't sit and talk, you just sit and listen and you don't talk to one another. You have your movies, you have this and that. Oh, so many different activities. You, you can't keep up with all of them. So it serves to keep people apart, rather than united. And the only time families really sit down and have time together, I guess, is when they eat. (Laughs) If they do.

MOTHER: Sometimes the meals are even disrupted because, if dad comes home from work at 5:30, Johnny has to go play little league at 6:00 and he doesn't get to see Johnny, because mother has dinner on the table, and Johnny's whished off to play little league, and big brother has to go play at the school band. Sister has to go to ballet, and mother has to go to her yoga. (Laughs) So you don't even get to eat. And sometimes this is even true on weekends when, you know, noramlly a family is together. So, that adds, you know, the distractions add to distract and separate more.

FATHER: On Sundays, where we do go to church together, and I guess that is one thing that we have going for us to hold us together.

BLAIR: A suburban family with three adolescents with reporter Carolyn Barnett. We will visit them again later in this OPTIONS IN EDUCATION program on adolescents and their families.

MERROW: Seventy-five years ago, families were different, very different. For one thing, the grandparents might have lived in the home. That's so rare

today that we call it the "extended family." Half the households contained adults besides the parents in 1900. Today, only 5% do. For another thing, adolescents worked, or they probably left home. Not very many adolescents remained dependent, and at home, after age 15 or 16.

BLAIR: And the typical adolescent had many more contacts with adults beyond the family; whereas today, adolescents' lives are more regulated. They spend much of their time in school, where the adults they come into contact with most often are teachers and counselors. Other time is spent in supervised activities, like school sports, and whatever free time remains is likely to be spent with friends. In this scheme, parents act as managers, according to Dr. Kenneth Keniston, Director of the Carnegie Council on Children, and author of All Our Children.

PARENTS AS MANAGERS OF THEIR ADOLESCENTS

KENISTON: Children are brought up by television, they're brought up by teachers, they're influenced by pediatricians, they're influenced by child care advisors, they're influenced by day care centers, so on. So parents while they still have the responsibility and take the blame if children don't turn out well, don't have the same means, the same say so, the same authority and control that they used to have.

BLAIR: Dr. Kenneth Keniston, Director of the Carnegie Council on Children, and principal author of All Our Children. Keniston mentioned television and its influence on young people. In fact, adolescents are not the biggest consumers of television. Studies show that adolescents watch significantly less television than younger, or older people.

MERROW: Why? Because the adolescents are out with their friends, too busy to watch TV.

BLAIR: Next week on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, we'll look at what adolescents do when they're alone, or with friends.

MERROW: We do know that adolescents watch TV at home with the family. We also know that the average family watches about six and a half hours of TV a day. And for many families, that time may be among the few hours spent together as a family, even though they're not talking to each other, just staring at the tube.

THE INFLUENCE OF TELEVISION

TEENAGER: You know, it's sort of exciting to see a person getting run down by a car and shot to death, and people being eaten by sharks and being pulled in by a "man-o-ray" and stuff like that.

MERROW: Reporter Carolyn Barnett talked about TV with the suburban family she visited. You just heard that the 14 year-old son likes action: that is, violence on TV. And that's a subject of concern to many parents, including his mother.

MOTHER: I try to not let them have a steady diet of TV. I don't really watch TV that much myself, but my husband watches with them, and they discuss what goes on in the program. And I think that they have a very healthy view about what is right and what is wrong, what they should and what they should not do. So, for my own family, I could say, I don't really think it affects them. But I can see this would happen to a youngster who is watching it solitary, without anybody to discuss it with, without having anybody to show them, or help them understand that this is not real.

BLAIR: For that mother, sitting down and talking with her children about what they see on TV is one way of countering possibly negative influences of television violence. Of course, there are lots of influences and issues which parents have to cope with, including money.

MERROW: First, there's the question of the allowance. Should a child get one? And if so, how much? And does the kid have to do certain things to get his or her allowance, like take out the garbage, mow the lawn, or make beds, or does the allowance come automatically?

BLAIR: Those questions come first, and they're followed by bigger problems for parents, because adolescents -- many of them -- can and do make their own money.

MERROW: And having made the money, it's theirs to spend, isn't it?

BLAIR: But, maybe they should save it for college, or pay room and board at home.

MERROW: And if they do spend it -- rock music albums, expensive T-shirts, makeup, junk food -- how many parents have gritted their teeth to loud sounds of some rock group and wondered what they did wrong in bringing up their teenagers.

BLAIR: They may not have done anything wrong, of course, and their kids may be acting normally. After all, they're part of what's called the "youth market," meaning that every year they and their peers buy $50 billion worth of goods and services.

MERROW: That's right. Our adolescents have that much to spend, and for the most part, very few responsibilities or obligations that they must spend it on: that is, most adolescents don't pay rent, or pay the bills at the supermarket, and so their money is what's known as "disposable income."

BLAIR: Ready to help them "dispose" of it are aggressive business men and women creating products kids need...

MERROW: ...or creating needs and then filling them.

THE YOUTH MARKET

HELITZER: We're business people. We are professional marketeers. It's not that we're Swengalis that are washing our hands into the money of teenagers. They are a very viable market. We do research, we ask a lot of questions, we keep a very close survey of what they're doing and of what they're thinking. They are easily misled, and it is easy to reach them with ersatz products that are over priced and under valued, and under quality.

BLAIR: That's Melvin Helitzer, co-author of The Youth Market. He talked about selling to adolescents with JoEllyn Rackleff.

HELITZER: They are very easily influenced. It's almost shocking to me as a marketing man how easily I can influence them. If I can get them to believe that this is something that their peer group is doing, if I can get them to believe that it's going to do something for them, either make them more beautiful or more healthy, in contrary, I can get them to do some very dangerous things if I wanted to. Because they are easily influenced, easily reached, and easily led. They're a very "today" market. They're a very "us" market, as one person described it, and psychologists who are on our staff and who talked to me about this are very confused by the adolescent. We can come out with crazy products that have absolutely no material value, and sell it like crazy because we...

RACKLEFF: Like what? Like what?

HELITZER: Oh, T-shirts. Now, everybody has T-shirts which have slogans on it, and even advertised with their products. There's no value to the T-shirt exept it's now a uniform. Now when I say no value to the T-shirt, there's no value to a T-shirt with a slogan on it, anymore than would be a regular white T-shirt or any other kind of sport shirt. Why are they spending twice as much money to get T-shirts, and other kind of clothing with slogans on it? They're trying to say something. It's worth money to them to just,"Hey, look at me. Look how kinky or crazy I am. Look at how much guts I've got to have some kind of a T-shirt on it with a salacious remark, or a pornographic's thing." And they're all trying for identity. All we have to do is come out with a product which a teenager will say, "Hey, this gives me attention," and we can sell it.

BLAIR: Melvin Helitzer, co-author of The Youth Market, talking with JoEllyn Rackleff.

MERROW: Helitzer says he can sell teenagers just about anything. But the adolescents we talked with disagree.

TEENAGERS AS CONSUMERS

TEENAGER: My friends and I sit around looking at advertisements that supposedly will sell us instantaneously, and we laugh at the techniques. My brother and I are very interested in certain advertising techniques, such as drawing ice cubes in, and painting psychological stimulating pictures in them. And we see them. I think that, that, that.... He's wrong! He's wrong! There is a great deal of that, true. But it certainly is not completely ubiquitous.

MERROW: How about money? Do you have much money to spend?

TEENAGER: No, not too much, but I get by.

MERROW: Well, how much do you have to spend a week?

TEENAGER: I get $5.00.

MERROW: You get?

TEENAGER: My parents give me $5.00 allowance.

MERROW: What do you have to do for that?

TEENAGER: Nothing. I just get $5.00.

MERROW: Well, what do you spend it on?

TEENAGER: Well, food, or records, or just junk, you know. It goes quickly. (laughs)

TEENAGER: For this past summer, for the first time, I've earned money. It wasn't very much at all, it was only $50.00 a week, but with that money I was able to buy.... I was able to go out to a store and buy clothes that I wanted to wear, which, you know, formerly, I had to ask my parents. And it makes a big difference -- those little things like earning money and being able to travel around.

MERROW: Do you think your friends, people you know, are in fact susceptible to being sold things, to buying a lot. I mean, kids have a lot of money to spend.

TEENAGER: I don't think the teenage market is any more susceptible to

manipulation than any other market.

BLAIR: John talked with those young people in Brooklyn, New York. They maintained that they're no more susceptible to advertising than any other group in America is. And psychologist Kenneth Keniston agrees.

IS ADVERTISING AN INFLUENCE ON THE ADOLESCENT AS A CONSUMER

KENISTON: I think it's very much a part of American life, and it's not simply adolescents who are appealed to in this way, it's adults. That by eliminating odors and by making your hair this way or that way, or what have you, all sorts of marvelous and wonderful things will follow. Now, I think most of us are of two minds about that. We sort of would like to have silky smooth hair without split ends, and not to smell bad, and to be attractive to other people, and we would...but at the same time, we know deep down inside that satisfaction in life does not come from hair conditioners. I mean, I think most adolescents know pretty well that -- it starts earlier in childhood in fact -- they know pretty well that the new products they see advertised are not always what they were led to believe, that the toys that are portrayed as king size, turn out to be very small and they break right away. And that lesson, that sort of cynicism about advertising is one that starts early and runs right straight through.

BLAIR: Dr. Kenneth Keniston, Director of the Carnegie Council on Children, and principal author of All Our Children.

A TEENAGER RESPONDS TO AMERICAN ADVERTISING

TEENAGER: They just want to rip you off -- most of the stuff. They showed this little knife, and it's about....They showed a little...a big picture of it, makes it look like it's 12 inches long. And you send away for it, you send $1.68 or whatever, and then they come in the mail. The little box says, "Midwest Knife Company," or something like that. You open it up, find a little knife three inches long, after they show this big picture of it. You know, make it look like it's huge, like you're getting a good deal.

MERROW: That adolescent told reporter Carolyn Barnett about a lesson he learned the hard way.

BLAIR: Speaking of learning lessons the hard way, there is a school of thought that believes that's how children and adolescents learn: by trying and failing, by doing something foolish and learning a lesson. In that case, the parents job is to prrovide a fairly safe -- but not too safe -- environment for their adolescents to experiment in. "Give them room to try, room to stretch their wings, but don't let them fall too far."

MERROW: It sounds easy, but it's not. And parents can be as confused about what to do with their adolescents, as the adolescents are themselves.

PARENTS FREQUENTLY ARE CONFUSED ABOUT HOW TO HANDLE ADOLESCENTS

MOTHER: A party that Andrea had -- I guess it was the first party she had -- Brooks and I are sitting up in our bedroom, which is not a particularly cozy place to spend what seemed like 12 hours, reading and doing jigsaw puzzles. And it occurred to us...we kept looking at each other...when do you suppose they'll leave. Then it occurred to us, no one had determined when they were supposed to leave. And we started laughing, and we finally ended up flipping a coin to see who got to be the dirty guy to go down and tell them that they had to go. (Laughter) And those kinds of things are things that you don't think about, I guess. The desire to give them independence and to let them go as far as they can comfortably go, but still have some restrictions so that they

have some, something to fall back on.

FATHER: I guess the biggest worries that I had prior to their entering teenage would be the peer group pressures, primarily to try illicit drugs.

MOTHER: I think it's probably.... Well, when kids are very little, you spend a lot of time with them physically, and now you spend a lot of time with them emotionally, psychologically. You know, they are perfectly able to scramble an egg, but the psychological part, which is much harder I think, to try and figure out where they're coming from. If they're looking for an answer to a problem, or possibilities or something, and give some guidance that's reasonable and useful. Because after all, I'm 20 some years older than they and it makes it different.

BLAIR: Connie Goldman talking to two parents of teenagers about being parents.

MERROW: They say it is difficult raising teenagers, and that conflicts arise: some minor -- knowing when to end a teenage party; some more difficult -- coping with their teenagers when they experiment with drugs.

BLAIR: Conflict itself is natural and normal. That's one generalization we can make, according to Dr. Kenneth Keniston.

FAMILY CONFLICT

KENISTON: The ideal arrangement is the arrangement that prevails in most American families: that is of course there are conflicts between parents and children, but they're worked out within the family. Most conflicts in any society are dealt with informally, and indeed they're dealt with by rules, so they never appear as conflicts in many cases. The most extreme cases of conflict of interest between parent and child in our society, or in any society, are those where the parents' behavior -- especially vis a vis a very small child -- is such that it endangers the life and the welfare of the child: that is child abuse is the most extreme example. In those cases, we and almost every other society, takes a very different attitude. As a last restriction we say, the state has an overriding interesting in protecting, or a requirement to protect the lives of children, than to try to...and that is the first thing that has to be done. In some cases, get the child out of the home. But we in this country have had a very peculiar attitude toward removal of children from homes that aren't working well. We're very quick to get the kids out of the house, put them in holding centers, and foster care arrangements, or what have you. But we're very slow -- despite the lip service we pay to the importance of families -- we're very slow to try to see if we can't get the family back together again.

BLAIR: Dr. Kenneth Keniston, Director of the Carnegie Council on Children. He brings up the darker side of families and adolescents: the ugly and unhappy situations that adolescents run away from.

MERROW: Keniston says that everything that goes wrong isn't the parents' fault. That some kids are just plain tough to be with, let alone bring up responsibly.

BLAIR: And that raises a point we shouldn't overlook: parents are changing too, going through stages in their own lives. Not necessarily divorce or some other visible, dramatic change, but changes nonetheless.

MERROW: As a society, we may be guilty of overlooking those changes, even if they are, as author Gail Sheehy maintains, predictable. Sheehy's book,

Passages, describes a series of changes that adults go through. Dr. Joan Lipsitz of the Learning Institute of North Carolina, points out that parents often experience their adult changes at the same time as their children are going through adolescence.

PARENTS THEMSELVES ARE IN A PROCESS OF CHANGE

LIPSITZ: What you get here is the possibility of a clash of developmental stages, where the parents of young adolescents are going through their own developmental crisis, and they do not have the psychic energy to deal with what's going on with their own children. And there is not anybody who, excuse me, there is only one person I have heard who was talking about this, and this gets into a whole other area which is the child abuse and neglect area. Every time you look at literature, having to do with child abuse and neglect, you'll see a cycle of abuse and neglect. It's the young children, the very young, who are battered and bruised. And then, when you get to the adolescent stage, it's the adolescent parent who is now abusing or battering his or her child, because of what happened to him or her as a toddler, or as a young child. And the myth -- we go back to myths -- is that we are at the mercy of these kids. I mean, we are abused by them, and I don't think that we have... think we're on the brink of it, but I don't think we have yet looked at how abused these kids are by violence in their own homes.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz, author of Growing Up Forgotten,, talking with reporter Barbara Bernhard of station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

TEENAGE RUNAWAYS

TEENAGER: Maybe...I find that most, you young people run away because their parents are strict on them, and I feel that that is no reason to want to run away from home. But I did it!

NEIGHMOND: Have you talked to your mother or your stepfather since you've been here?

TEENAGER: I talked to both of them.

NEIGHMOND: What did they say?

TEENAGER My mother said it'll be ok if they send me to a foster home.

NEIGHMOND: What did your stepfather say?

TEENAGER: He said, he agreed with my mother.

TEENAGER: I seem to have become "second string" to my father's...to my father, period, where I was here long before his wife, or his two children were here. And it seems like he wants to throw back...forget what happened in the first marriage. But he can't throw me back because I'm a life, I'm not a divorce paper that you can put in a safe and forget about.

MERROW: Those three teenagers are among the estimated two million children who run away from home every year. The average runaway is 15 years old; half are female.

BLAIR: The reasons? Lack of communication, not getting along with parents, drinking and drug addiction among parents. But the social workers report that about half of the runaways cite incest and other forms of physical abuse as their reason for leaving home.

MERROW: Leaving home -- running away -- is certainly not new, but

experts contrast today's runaways with those of the 1960's. In that decade, runaways were often "flower children" looking to be free of the constraints of home and hometown.

BLAIR: But today, we're told, the kids are running because of family problems.

MERROW: Runaways are likely to head for big cities, but today, they're less likely to be picked up by the police and charged with the "crime" of running away, which is what happened to their counterparts in the 1960's. Instead, they're seeking help -- a secure place -- from friends or acquaintances or,in about 40% of the cases, from crisis centers, or residential runaway houses.

BLAIR: We asked reporter Patti Neighmond to spend some times in a local runaway house near Washington, D.C., part of the SAJA Network. SAJA, S-A-J-A stands for Special Approaches to Juvenile Assistance. And in Washington, it includes the runaway house where from six to twelve adolescents a week seek temporary housing.

MERROW: The SAJA Program also has a foster care placement program, and family counselling for runaways and their families.

BLAIR: Across the country, runaway programs like SAJA received $7 million in federal assistance in 1976. That's a big boost from the $2 million in 1973. Most of the funds come from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

MERROW: Living at SAJA is a temporary solution, and the young people must eventually decide whether they'll return home, or seek other alternatives, such as foster care.

BLAIR: Most do end up back home, according to SAJA counselors, but only after trying other alternatives.

MERROW: Our reporter, Patti Neighmond, talked to a runaway girl, whose history is not unusual. Lashone -- that's not her real name, but the alias she chose -- ran away for the first time when she was 12. She went to live with her grandmother, who eventually sent her back home, because, she said, Lashone was "incorrigible."

BLAIR: When she was 15, Lashone ran away again, this time to SAJA. She told Patti Neighmond that among the reasons she left was physical abuse.

LASHONE: A TEENAGE RUNAWAY

LASHONE: I felt like my parents were treating me unfairly, and when I, when I turned about 11, that's when I started speaking up for myself, because they were blaming me for things that I didn't do, and I wasn't going to take all the responsibilities, you know, for the things my little sisters did. I would take the blame for what they did, and I would get beatings for this, you know, and I do mean...my parents really did get on me. I mean, they don't beat you with your clothes on, you get stripped naked.

MERROW: Lashone chose foster care for a year, as an alternative to going back home.

LASHONE: My foster parents, she was a female, she was in middle age, and she understood the way, the way young people are, and we had a very close relationship, and I miss her.

MERROW: But during that year, she and her family -- her mother and her sisters -- took part in SAJA's counselling program.

LASHONE: It did good for me, cause a lot of things that I never knew before came out in those sessions.

NEIGHMOND: Were your parents willing to come?

LASHONE: Well, my mother, my mother and my sisters did, but my father didn't want to come. He didn't want to participate at all. Because he knew that everything was going to come out about him.

MERROW: Lashone now lives at home, with her mother. Reporter Neighmond reached Lashone's mother by phone, and asked her why Lashone ran away.

LASHONE'S MOTHER: You know, she'd never given me a reason for running away, she hasn't given me a reason for coming home. I really don't know.

NEIGHMOND: She told me that she ran away because she was blamed for things she didn't do, and that her father would beat her. Was that true?

LASHONE'S MOTHER: Well, when she'd do something that she wasn't supposed to do, sure he would beat her. Now, he didn't, you know, he wasn't the type person that just beat on her for anything, you know. Like if he told them not to go out and they went out anyway, or something, you know, he would beat em. But I don't think...you could almost count the times that he really beat anybody.

NEIGHMOND: So you never really talked about why she ran away. Do you talk at the counselling sessions at SAJA about it?

LASHONE'S MOTHER: Yeah, well there were, you know, we talked in the counselling sessions and, I don't know, they were always, I don't know, blocked. I think the counselling session, you know, sort of helped me realize that we're living, living in another day and another time, you know.

LASHONE: And now, everything is all right. We have a beautiful relationship -- me, my two sisters and my mother. My mother's working, we live in a house, and my mother tries to get us anything we want, you know, if she can. But if she can't, well, she's trying.

MERROW: Lashone, a two-time runaway, and her mother. They're now together again at home.

BLAIR: Most adolescents who find their way to SAJA's runaway house in Washington, D.C., eventually return home, but not every runaway -- there are two million a year, remember -- ends up home again.

MERROW: And we have no way of knowing whether Lashone will remain home, or run away again.

BLAIR: Some runaways simply disappear, others are lured into prostitution and crime.

MERROW: On the other hand, some are sent back into homes where they're not wanted, and where their lives are miserable.

BLAIR: Laurie Kaplan, a SAJA counselor, told Patti Neighmond how the counselors try to help runaways decide whether to go back home or to seek other solutions to their problems.

KAPLAN: The runaway house, it is like a family. It's a transient family, but some of the young people stay there up to a month, or a month and a half. You know, you eat together, you do chores together, you meet everyday in groups, talk about what's going on with each other, really help each other out, like brothers, sisters, parents, friends, are supposed to do. So, the kind of atmosphere we want to create is one like a family,giving those young people the support and the stability to be able to make their own decisions, to be responsible, all of the things families should do.

MERROW: Runaway youth counselor, Laurie Kaplan, talking with Patti Neighmond.

BLAIR: Runaway youth homes aren't the only places that strive to be like families, to create for the young person the atmosphere of a good home. A home away from home is a cliche only because it's true. And the family, or some image of what a family should be, is what we always seem to come back to.

MERROW: That's even true for some child counselors whose job it may be to protect children from their families. Some, like psychotherapist Theodora Ooms, believe that the problems of one family member belong to the whole family, and that,therefore, the whole family must be included in the treatment.

BLAIR: Ooms is Deputy Director of the Family Impact Seminar of George Washington University, which is studying the ways in which government policies on work, welfare and teenage pregnancy, among other things, affect families.

MERROW: When I talked to Theodora Oooms recently, I asked her for an example of an adolescent's problem that ought to be treated with the "whole child/whole family" approach.

THE 'WHOLE CHILD/WHOLE FAMILY' TREATMENT

OOMS: Think of a child who...an adolescent who is running away, ok. Runs away. And runs away to some kind of a youth center, and people in the youth center help that adolescent realize that you've got to go back and face the music, and they do meet with the whole family. You might figure out, find out that the reason that child is running away is because two months ago, an older sister was sick and died. That's a dramatic example, but that happens. Now, if the counselor had not had the kinds of sensitive discussion with the family and reviewed what had happened in the past few months and what was going on, might never learn that this child was really upset, because no one had made that connection with the fact that an older sister died. And that this...the child's feelings and grief had never been dealt with by the family.

MERROW: What then does the person that this runaway youth center do with that knowledge?

OOMS: Well, they, they, with some training -- and some people do this instinctively -- they try to get the family to talk about this. If they highlight this, they say, "Well, maybe...did you ever, you know...how did your child...your...the younger brother react to it when Jane died." And they say, "Oh, he seemed to be fine." You know, we all manage to disavow it, but the issues were never talked about, and all that happened was that the boy started failing in school. And so instead of somehow figuring out that he was failing in school because he was upset, they started getting on his back. And they got on his back, and they started getting upset with him, and so he runs away. So the issue is completely misunderstood. People can untangle these kinds of

relationships and these kind of cause and effect things. And ways in which families -- at periods of stress particularly, or periods of change, and adolescence is a period of change -- need to readjust the way they deal with each other. I think the adolescent issue is a complicated one, cause clearly, some adolescents won't come to a service if you insist their families come with them. But I have worked with people who've worked in that context, and they say that in the beginning you work with the adolescents themselves, and then you help them see how their parents are involved in their problem. And you often can say, "Well, how about if we all talk together," and sometimes the adolescent will welcome you being there to help act as a buffer. He or she knows she has to negotiate some important issues with the parents: about drugs, or staying out late, or cars, or whatever. And sometimes a counselor can help that teenager do that. And if you put it in that sense, context, "I will help you negotiate your problems with your parent," they can sometimes bring the family back in.

MERROW: Theodora Ooms, Deputy Director of the Family Impact Seminar in Washington, D.C. The family has been under stress for a long time, as we've said, but today the problem is getting a lot of attention. Prominent politicians, including President Carter and Vice President Mondale, speak often and forcefully about the need to strengthen the family.

BLAIR: And foundations are making grants to support family-oriented projects, like the Family Impact Seminar, where Theodora Ooms is Deputy Director. Many colleges and universities are setting up centers for the study of the family, or some such place.

MERROW: Apparently, we've realized that the family will be around, and who knows, maybe all this attention will help parents with the difficult task of bringing up children.

BLAIR: We won't be going back to the days of the extended family though, and, for Dr. Joan Lipsitz, that's a real loss.

THE LOSS OF THE EXTENDED FAMILY

LIPSITZ: When my parents were raised, the extended family was there as a support system. You were asking me before, you know, what are the support systems that are out there, and I answered you in terms of social services, or professionals. I left out, really, the critical issue about...of isolation, which is that the nuclear family is isolated now. When I am parenting, there's nobody parenting me. Who's meeting my needs, when I'm meeting the needs of my child. I mean, there's still a child inside me crying out, saying, "Somebody take care of me." Now, in the extended family, there's a grandmother, there are aunts, there are uncles, and so forth. There used to be boarders. People talk about our change in architecture, that the whole loss of the front porch says so much about the loss of community and how isolated the nuclear family has become. The issue is not just the solo parent, but the family in isolation. Now who is there to give me the supportiveness that I need? I think that this issue of the loss of community and the loss of the extended family is a very important one that we need to look at, when we start deciding how we're going to develop appropriate support systems for parents.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz, author of Growing Up Forgotten, talking with reporter Barbara Bernhard of station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

BLAIR: Lipsitz was recalling her own childhood, and that reminds us that all of our experts were once adolescents, and most are parents now, and they're thinking about studying and trying to explain what it all means.

MERROW: Earlier, Kenneth Keniston, author of All Our Children, and a

psychologist with adolescent children of his own, talked about the inevitable, but nonetheless uncomfortable time, when kids learn that their parents have "feet of clay": that is that mom and dad aren't perfect.

A CRITIQUE OF 'MOM'

MOTHER: See how gracious she is? You should be equally as gracious.

DAUGHTER: Mom, you sould like you're...

DAUGHTER: I know, you're acting like a...

MOTHER: No, you should be equally as gracious.

DAUGHTER: You, you don't talk like that!

DAUGHTER: Mom, you don't talk like that!

SON: I notice that you usually talk all boisterous and everything.

MOTHER: Yes, when I talk...

DAUGHTER: Talk like your talking to Phil.

SON: ...tired of each other sticking around all day.

MOTHER: Right.

DAUGHTER: Talk like your talking to Phil.

MOTHER: Well, you see...

DAUGHTER: I know. Or talking to an air conditioning man, or some guy, that she wants service from she'll talk like that.

DAUGHTER: As one guy said, she sounded like an old English lady.

MOTHER: Old English! (Laughs) What's an old English lady?

DAUGHTER: Like an English lady...like she was white...

MOTHER: From England.

DAUGHTER: ...from the way she was talking.

MOTHER: The sound is different.

DAUGHTER: I know. We're talking about your quality....

DAUGHTER: ...the way you talk.

MOTHER: Well, what do you mean "the way I talk."

DAUGHTER: You talk like you're English.

MOTHER: Oh, goodness. (Laughs). Would you repeat that please.

DAUGHTER: Are you trying to stop me from talking non-stop and stuff.

MOTHER: Non-stop. That's an idea.

DAUGHTER: You've been talking for all the time. Everytime that someone says something, you say,"But" and then you start a new conversation, "But," and then you start a new conversation with "Weeell, Sheeela, you know she hasn't been working enough and"...and everything like that.

DAUGHTER: "BUT!" (laughter)

MERROW: Reporter Carolyn Barnett with a family in suburban Maryland.

BLAIR: That bittersweet experience,and the time when every child must forgive his or her parents for not being perfect, is universal, or nearly so. We've tried to talk with most of our experts about their own teenage years, or about their own adolescent children.

Michael Timpane is principal author of an important study of public policy toward adolescence. He's also the father of four teenagers.

MICHAEL TIMPANE TALKS ABOUT HIS OWN EXPERIENCES

TIMPANE: Any, any family goes through the great, the great mystery of learning about freedom, and that's not, that's not an intellectual learning. It's very much an experience. It's one of those...in my...the way I see it, it's, it's one of those happenings that, that the parent realizes one day -- that the child is free -- and then is satisfied or not about that. And it almost always occurs sooner than one thinks, at least that's the way I see it. And it's such a, it's such a natural and inevitable and good thing. The hardest thing for most parents -- me included I think -- is to try to keep the baggage as light as the trip calls for. (Laughter)

MERROW: Explain what you mean.

TIMPANE: Which, which is to say, to know...to understand what you really feel it's important to...that you pass on to your child, and what is not. And I think that most of us start out with a great long "shopping list" of things that we want to pass on to our children, and almost none of us check off every item on that list as the years go by. And I guess that it would be a great blessing if we could maybe just snip off half the list at some stage, and, and and let it go; and say "That was a worthy ambition, but it didn't work out. But that's ok. You know, there are other, there are other things that are still important."

MERROW: One, the sense of your kids discovering that you have "feet of clay" as it were. You know, there's a period when kids in fact, you know, look at their parents as paragons. You know, they really are the most important, or maybe the only adult models they have for quite awhile, and see them...and they tend to see them as perfect, or nearly so. I wonder if adolescence is a time when your kids discover that in fact you -- Mike Timpane -- really aren't perfect?

TIMPANE: For sure. And that's...I think that's true of every...that's true of every parent, and that's.... But as I said -- I don't know quite how to, how to phrase this -- it's going to happen, it's going to happen to every parent. And thank God it does, since it happens to be true...(Laughter)

MERROW: Has it happened in your family?

TIMPANE: ...of every parent. And being able to accept that is, is part of the way that parents have to grow up.

BLAIR: Michael Timpane, principal author of "Youth Policy in Transition" and Deputy Director of the National Institute of Education.

MERROW: And so where does that leave us? What's the first and most important need for the successful nurturing of adolescents within their families? The experts tell us what we may have known from the beginning: that love is essential!

BLAIR: It may not be enough: that is, you need more than love. We need effective institutions -- agencies and organizations that support families, parents and children -- and we also need ways to protect children from families when things go very wrong. But love is where you have to start, according to Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University.

LOVE: THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN AN ADOLESCENT'S LIFE

BRONFENBRENNER: If someone were to ask me as a specialist in this area of human development, what is the most important condition for the development of the young, I would say that that condition is the irrational involvement of one or more adults in activities with the young.

MERROW: You say irrational.

BRONFENBRENNER: Irrational. And that's exactly what I mean. That is these have to be people who are crazy about that kid.

MERROW: Um huh. I think you mean parents.

BRONFENBRENNER: Well, you can ask the question, who gets crazy about kids? If you're gonna...if you have to have people crazy about kids, where would you turn? And you've given the answer. Of course, parents are naturals for that role, they're easy to get crazy about their kids if the circumstances of their lives permit them to exercise that involvement. But, there's been a big tendency, of course, to leave your child alone. Besides, both parents are now working, and as more mothers enter the work force, there has not been a perceptible tendency for more fathers to stay home. And we've gone to a nuclear family, and sometimes to a half nuclear family -- over one-sixth of the nation's children are in single parent families -- and everybody has to be working because the cost of living is going up. And you love your kids, and that's why you work, but if you work you're not with your kids. And if you're with your kids, there are so many things that have to get done, you don't have time to get involved in, you know, Boy Scouts, or activities, or camping trips, or heaven knows what, because our way of life doesn't, doesn't allow time or reward. Nobody's going to pat you on the back for saying, "Hey, I understand that you didn't go to work yesterday so you could be with your kid. Congratulations! We're raising your pay," you know. It doesn't happen.

BLAIR: Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University. John talked with him at a conference on the Cornell campus in Ithaca, New York, recently.

MERROW: And our own irrational involvement with adolescents comes to an end next week, with the fifth and final program in this series. Our subject: adolescents alone and with their peers.

BLAIR: In that program, the adolescents themselves are the experts, and you may be in for some surprises. We hope you'll join us.

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BLAIR: This special five-part series on "Adolescence in America" was developed by John Merrow, JoEllyn Rackleff, David Selvin, and Katharine Ferguson.

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MERROW: Material for this program, Part IV in the series, came in part from Barbara Bernhard, station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina; and Carolyn Barnett, Connie Goldman, JoEllyn Rackleff and Patti Neighmond in Washington, D.C.

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BLAIR: You can buy the set of five transcripts of this series by sending $2.00 to National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C., 20036. The five cassettes are also available for $25.00.

MERROW: The set of five transcripts also contains a bibliography of reference material about adolescence. The five transcripts cost $2.00. The five cassettes are $25.00.

BLAIR: If you've written to us already and many listeners have, please be patient. This was Program IV in the five part series, and the transcripts won't be mailed until the series is completed.

MERROW: We have a program guide free for the asking with our schedule for the next three months. It also lists available transcripts from previous OPTIONS IN EDUCATION programs.

BLAIR: Here's the address again: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C., 20036. Ask for Programs 92 through 96, "Adolescence in America."

MERROW: And please, tell us the call letters of your NPR station.

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BLAIR: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is written and produced by John Merrow. The assistant producer is Katharine Ferguson; technical assistance by Chip Fetrow, Bob Nock and Ralph Woods. I'm Wendy Blair.

* * *

MERROW: I'm John Merrow and this is NPR -- National Public Radio.

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"PORTRAIT OF AMERICAN ADOLESCENCE"

PART V

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and this week we conclude our series on adolescence in America...

BLAIR: ...with a look at adolescents alone and in groups.

* * *

TEENAGER: You would like...during the day you would look forward to meeting your friends and getting drunk. And that was the highlight of the whole summer.

TEENAGER: Sitting around at home and, and... there's not much difference between that and then sitting around here except you, you know, you're drinking. But I'd rather sit around here and be bored out of my mind, than sit at home.

WOMAN: I get the sense that a lot of people don't date per se anymore. People go out in groups. It's much more...less formal. It's a less formalized way of social interacting.

TEENAGER: Now's like one of the best times of your life cause you're living at home and most people have a part time job -- you've got money. And, like when you get out of high school and you go to college, you don't have to go all day, you can do whatever you want like for most of the day. And you get a car, you'll be able to go wherever you want. You don't have the responsibility of going to a job everyday and paying rent and paying all these bills. You just, you know, live at home, and then you want to go out at night, you do what you want to do.

TEENAGER: It's really pretty easy.

* * *

MERROW: Adolescents spend about one-third of their time alone, according to a recent study.

BLAIR: Twenty-one per cent of the time they can be found with their friends...

MERROW: ...and the rest of the time, according to that same study, they're asleep, or with their families, or in school.

BLAIR: Those are averages, of course, and if there's one thing we've learned about adolescents, it's that it's risky to generalize. After all, there are 41 million young people between the ages of 12 and 21.

MERROW: We've learned that young adolescents, ages 12-15, are very often

quite different from older adolescents, 16 to 21.

BLAIR: And we know that the stage known as adolescence is beginning earlier for most people, and lasting longer. Our young people are maturing faster physically, and the social pressures to act older, now begin earlier.

MERROW: But just because there's pressure to act older, and just because some kids are maturing earlier, that doesn't mean that every adolescent who graduates from high school, or gets a driver's license is mature and ready to face the adult world.

BLAIR: We've learned, too, that American adolescents are most often segregated by age and kept in what might be called a "holding pattern."

MERROW: That is, they're ready, or at least they think they're ready, for adult responsibilities, especially work; but the adult society doesn't want them yet. The message "Go to college," is interpreted by some adolescents to mean,"Be patient and wait your turn."

BLAIR: For the most part, adolescents do their waiting in schools, and schools, as we will learn, are the source of extreme dissatisfaction and boredom for many adolescents. Schools segregate adolescents by age, and sometimes by sex or by academic performance.

MERROW: One unintended consequence of the age segregation seems to have been the creation of a nearly separate "youth culture," and a corresponding increase in adult misunderstanding, fear, and even envy of adolescents.

BLAIR: We've sent them away, and now it seems that many of us don't know what adolescents are really like.

REED LARSEN ON WHAT ADOLESCENTS ARE FEELING

LARSEN: Most researchers, when they do research, they bring people into an office, or they ask...give them a questionnaire, but they never ask people what their life is like at the moments that it occurs. They don't go out and really see what people feel like when they're at the prom, or on their first date, or talking to their parents, or trying to get the car from their dad.

BLAIR: One person who has a pretty good idea of what adolescents are like, alone and with their peers, is researcher Reed Larsen of the University of Chicago. He conducted an experiment in which 78 high school students carried beepers, similar to those worn by doctors. Then he beeped the young people at random times during a week, and asked the teenagers to describe in writing their activity at that moment.

MERROW: Whenever the participants were in school or in a crowd, they would push a switch on their beeper that made it into a silent alarm, so it would vibrate instead of beeping. The idea was to contact each participant without anyone else knowing what was going on.

BLAIR: Whenever beeped, each participant would fill out a form in a data book, answering such questions as: "What are you doing?"; "How much choice did you have in selecting this activity?"; "How well are you concentrating?"; "What are you thinking about?"; "Are you in control of your actions?"; and "Is there anything at stake for you in this activity?" The researcher, Reed Larsen, also asked the participants to describe their mood at the time: from alert to drowsy, from sociable to lonely, from excited to bored, and so forth.

MERROW: Larsen found that boys preferred being with their friends, and were generally uncomfortable when at home with parents. Girls, on the other hand, didn't mind being with their mothers and fathers.

BLAIR: John talked with Reed Larsen at a conference at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, recently.

LARSEN: Particularly for boys, the context of the family was, was one which they knew to be very negative, one in which they wanted to be somewhere else; and their moods were low, their concentration was very low. They reported themselves as being less alert, less friendly, less sociable. It really sounded like...it reminded me of my own adolescence, as a time when I just didn't want to communicate with my family. I just felt shut out and had nothing to share.

MERROW: And that was particularly true of boys. They felt that powerlessness and that, that desire to be somewhere else.

LARSEN: Yeah, you know, you talk to girls and they say...and you ask them, "What do you share with your family?", and they say, "Everything." And you can see that in their data, that when they were with their family, they were open, they were friendly, and they were really trying to communicate. Whereas for guys, they tell you, "I didn't tell my family anything. I wouldn't let them know what's going on!"

And another half of this is, we compared it to relationships with their friends, and what, what their feelings were like, and what those things are going through their head when they're with friends. And we found that, particularly guys, had incredibly good experiences with their friends, and that was, that was the context where things were happening, where they were learning things, where they really felt like they were themselves, and where they felt strong, where they felt friendly, where they felt challenged, where they felt... and they concentrated the most. And that's another part of the puzzle is, is that environment -- those relationships with friends that seem to be so tremendously important.

BLAIR: Reed Larsen of the University of Chicago. We'll hear more about his research later in the program.

MERROW: Larsen reports that young boys would rather be with their friends than with their families. We sent reporter David Selvin to find out what they do when they're together.

WHY TEENAGE BOYS 'HANG OUT'

SELVIN: Why do you"hang out?"

TEENAGER: Nothing else to do. (Laughter)

TEENAGER: A good reason to drink. My name's anonymous! (Laughter)

SELVIN: I remember you! (Laughter) Why do you"hang out?"

TEENAGER: There's nothing else to do, you know. You just get bored, and you just come out here and drink and...

SELVIN: Is there really nothing else to do? I mean, really?

TEENAGER: There are, but it cost money.

TEENAGER: Yeah, that's just it. You got to have money. You got to have money; we don't work.

TEENAGER: You go in town, you gotta pay money, you know, beer is so expensive down there. It's just as easy as to come here.

SELVIN: I used to "hang out." I gotta be honest with you, I used to "hang out"

a lot, as a matter of fact. And that was boring too!

TEENAGER: Yes, Yeah. It does get boring.

TEENAGER: It's the truth man, this gets boring, seeing everybody drinking every night.

TEENAGER: It's the same people every night that come here, just get...

TEENAGER: You want to do something else.

SELVIN: Like what?

TEENAGER: Go out with girls! (Laughter)

TEENAGER: But they cost money too!

SELVIN: The one thing that I remember the most from being, you know, your age, was wanting to get out of the house.

TEENAGER: That's exactly right.

SELVIN: Why? I really don't remember why, except, about all I remember is I really wanted to get out.

TEENAGER: Cause you want it to happen, you want to get on your own.

TEENAGER: And also, you don't want to just sit in your house by yourself with the TV tube, you want to be with your friends. At least you can, you know, talk about anything, you know.

TEENAGER: Your parents don't want to really want to listen to Fog Hat or Led Zeppelin. But, you know, if you stay at home, that's all you can do is play your stereo, unless you want to have somebody come over and play cards, or something.

TEENAGER: And you get tired of that.

TEENAGER: You do.

TEENAGER: We have fun. It's fun at the time, when you look back you say it's a waste.

TEENAGER: The way I see it is that as long as we're having fun and not hurting nobody, not causing no trouble, there's nothing wrong in it.

BLAIR: Teenage boys in Virginia, "hanging out" with reporter David Selvin.

MERROW: That sounded harmless, but groups of adolescents can cause trouble, or get into trouble. Often it's not clear which comes first: being suspected of causing trouble, or the trouble itself.

BLAIR: That is, some adolescents told us that since adults, particularly the police, assumed that they were making trouble, they might as well make it.

MERROW: Many communities have teen centers, places which try to turn "hanging out" into some sort of constructive activity, like sports, dancing, or even skateboarding. Bill Blackton visited one such place near Los Angeles.

* * *

A TEENAGE DISCOTHEQUE

MAN: Well I would say, basically, it's a, a teenage discotheque with the age limit running...you have to be 21 to 20 or under to get in here,and the average age running about 16 years old. And they come here and they dance, and and they talk. It's...sometimes it looks like a high school dance.

* * *

TEENAGER: Coming here is like coming to a really big party, cause all my friends...there's a few here from school, and from all over they come.

* * *

BLACKTON: If you weren't here, where would you go?

TEENAGER: I'd, I'd probably go to a party, or sit down and be bored at home, you know. But I think it's a really good place for...instead of people going out, kids my age going out on the street, you know, and going to go get laid, or something, you know. It's better that they're here and they can meet guys, and, you know. I think it's a really good place.

TEENAGER: Tuesday night's a good night to come, because the girls get in free, stuff like that, you know, like this Tuesday night was pretty good -- a lot of girls.

* * *

TEENAGER: There isn't much you can do, you know, when you're under 21, but you know, try and have as much fun as you can. You know, you can't drink here, but, you know, it wouldn't be too much fun if you could anyway. They aren't too strict, they don't really have any rules, only the rules that you apply to yourself, you know.

BLACKTON: Well, what about drugs? Do you know any kids who get high before they come and, you know?

TEENAGER: Yeah, I guess it's a part of every party though, you know. You got, you gotta be on something, you know, to have a good time. If you're not on nothing, you know, it's kind of a bore, you know. You gotta have at least a couple of beers, or something. Sure, a lot of people here come, come loaded, and a little high, but that's no problem.

* * *

BLAIR: That report for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION from Bill Blackton in Los Angeles, California.

MERROW: Researcher Reed Larsen found that adolescents spend about one-third of their time alone. He says that time alone is important, although too much solitude can be bad.

BLAIR: But what do they do when they're alone? Let's rejoin John's conversation with Reed Larsen.

BUT WHAT DO ADOLESCENTS DO WHEN THEY'RE ALONE?

LARSEN: Time alone was spent doing a whole variety of things. Some people spent time reflecting, others...studying was the foremost activity. They spent about 15% of their time studying.

MERROW: That's going to be nice news for teachers listening: 15% of their time -- ok.

LARSEN: Fifteen per cent is not very much, considering their total amount of time that they had. It's...

MERROW: But, but you figure on television alone, if I remember, was 11%.

LARSEN: Yeah, adolescents, I think of all people in the country, watch the least TV, I mean, compared to other age periods.

MERROW: That's because of that time with peers, and that very valuable time; and you're quite correct, viewing time does drop when kids are at that age.

LARSEN: Uh huh. Yeah, definitely.

MERROW: A third major activity for kids when they were alone, I think, was grooming. What's that mean?

LARSEN: Well, I think it means that if you're, if you're in the bathroom, you close the door. (Laughter) It also includes getting dressed, things that are typically done in private life. It may also mean...

MERROW: ...trying to clear up your pimples.

LARSEN: Yeah, combing your hair, looking at yourself, looking at your physique, and that sort of thing. We found some people who had, sort of private things that they did by themselves, like several people I talked to were very much into being alone so that they could dance, which is something I've always done. When I get alone, is turn on a record, and just move, and experience oneself, and that sort of free situation, which is another part of the puzzle, sort of...it provides a special opportunity to do things, and experience yourself in ways that you can't experience yourself with other people, and to really be free from their constant social lives.And I think it's really important. But there's a paradox involved, which is that people who spend too much time alone...we think of the social isolates, and our, our...that needs to be hung, or burned at the stake, or something.

MERROW: It's not just a paradox, it's a contradiction because I think you reported that the kids really don't like to be alone.

LARSEN: What we reported is that their moods were more negative alone. In our previous study, we found that adolescents who spend an intermediate amount of time alone, were the least alienated; that teenagers who spent a...very little time alone -- all their time with other people -- were much more alienated than those that spent, say 30% of the time by themselves, which leads me to believe that that's a very important time,and confirms my own convictions that that's time that we all need -- as adults, as adolescents, as children even.

* * *

TEENAGERS TALK ABOUT WHAT THEY DO WHEN THEY'RE ALONE

MERROW: How much time do you spend by yourself?

TEENAGER: By myself? About, I'd say about two or three hours a day.

MERROW: What do you do during those two,or three hours?

TEENAGER: I either read, or play an instrument, or just think.

MERROW: How much time do you spend looking at myself?

TEENAGER: Looking at myself? Well, about 45 minutes to an hour, morning and night. Yeah. When I get up and when I go to bed.

MERROW: How much time do you spend looking in the mirror?

TEENAGER: I spend...I look in the mirror every time I have something important to do that I don't want to do: when I have homework to do and I can't sit down and write it, I get up and I comb my hair.

MERROW: When you look in the mirror, what do you see that makes you worry? Anything?

TEENAGER: About me?

MERROW: Yeah.

TEENAGER: I'm short, (laughs) and I'm little, and I get pimples, and I have to wear glasses, and my hair isn't right. Things like that. But I don't really mind that too much. (Laughs) I mean it's not...I mean I think about it, but I mostly think about it in a kidding around way. It's not, it's not very serious. It's not, you know, that's not very important, I don't think.

MERROW: Do you use any of those "magic formulas" to clear up pimples?

TEENAGER: (Laughs) Every once in a while, when I walk into the store and I'm getting really fed up with everything, with life in general, I'll buy something like that. (Laughs) Not seriously though. I mean, I never use it for more than three days.

BLAIR: High school students in Brooklyn, New York, talking about what they do when they're alone.

MERROW: Researcher Reed Larsen of the University of Chicago found that adolescents spend just over 20% of their time with their families.

BLAIR: Much of that family time may also be TV time: that is, parents and children sitting together watching the tube. Maybe that really ought to be counted as time alone, since the adolescents may not even be aware of their parents, and vice versa.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF ADOLESCENTS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE HOME

LARSEN: With family, the major...the three major activities were watching TV, eating, of course -- that's your suppertime -- and talking, and a lot of other things sort of on the side. But those three things seem to be the major context of adolescent experience with their families.

MERROW: Let me suggest a problem: watching TV, even in a group,can be a really solitary experience. You don't necessarily...you aren't necessarily with someone if you're sitting there and you're all watching -- I don't know, what's on TV.

LARSEN: Yeah, that's true, and the TV may, in fact, be a means of maintaining privacy, even though for some reason you might be stuck with your family. Like if you don't have a private room, the best thing to do is turn on the TV and that provides you with at least a noise screen, and some sense of.... What's interesting is some people I've seen use the TV as a means of, in their conversation with someone, they'll, they'll make a sentence to their mother, or something, and then they'll quick look at the TV. And it's sort of

a means of avoiding a full interaction with that person.

BLAIR: Researcher Reed Larsen of the University of Chicago. In his study, 78 teenagers carried beepers for a week, and were buzzed at random. Whenever they were buzzed, they wrote down what they were doing, and how they felt about it.

MERROW: Self-consciousness, an awareness of what you're doing and what others might think of it,are part of adolescence. One young girl told me what she thinks about, and how she thinks about what she's thinking about, and, well, listen.

A SELF-CONSCIOUS TEENAGER

TEENAGER: I do worry a lot about...not worry, I think a lot. I'm very conscious of how I might look at something, as opposed to the way someone else might, and then if our reactions are exactly the same, you know...I don't know.

MERROW: Another way to ask that question would be to ask a question about how aware you are of what other people think of you.

TEENAGER: Sure, I mean, I think of that a lot...yeah, of what other people think, also. Are you asking me...what exactly do you want me to say if I do... I do think about that a lot. I do. I'm conscious of it. I sometimes get confused. I think about it so much that sometimes I lose perspective on what I really...in more, in broader terms, not just like what clothes I'm wearing, but what I'm saying or what I'm doing, how I'm reacting to something. I'm sometimes not even sure if I'm really reacting in a real way for myself. I'm very conscious of my performing constantly, and, you know, I perform for myself. I'm sometimes not certain when I'm performing for myself, which I do a lot, even when other people are around, or when I'm performing for other people; and if I get the two confused, or if I'm fooling myself to think, you know, I'm performing for myself, or I'm really...I know what I'm doing and then...when in reality I'm, you know, I'm just, sort of, I want to create an image and I want to make things nice and easy, you know...if I'm being honest. You know, the big H. (Laughs) I don't know.

BLAIR: John talked with that young girl in Brooklyn, New York.

MERROW: Whatever adolescents actually do when they're not with adults, probably isn't the major basis for adults feelings about adolescents: that is, our feelings about adolescents are probably based on what we think they're doing, more than on what we know they're up to.

BLAIR: Michael Timpane is the principal author of "Youth Policy in Transition," a report that's extremely critical of three earlier studies of adolescents. He says that the way we -- that is adults -- think about adolescents affects the way they think about themselves.

HOW SOCIETY VIEWS ADOLESCENTS: A LESSON IN AMBIGUITY

TIMPANE: I bet if we stopped and thought about it for awhile, we would find our styles to be, you know, gloriously contradictory...

MERROW: How do you mean?

TIMPANE: ...in our, in our view, in our view of adolescents. We admire and envy young people, and, and yet we worry greatly about them. We consider it -- ever since the days of Thorndike -- a time of Sturm und Drang, a time of emotional instability. We have, in our affluence, given young people purchasing power that that age group has never had before, and created a veritable

sub-economy in which they buy and sell.

MERROW: And are exploited.

TIMPANE: And are exploited, and, and then we ring our hands at mod fashions and at rock music, and at the things they purchase. I think that all of us probably hold many contradictory views of this, of this age group. We are all fundamentally ambivalent in one way or another in our views, in our views of youth.

MERROW: The sense I get from your report, though, Mike, is that you, your bottom line is -- I would have to paraphrase your elegant language into, "Hey everybody, don't worry all that much. Not every group of kids "hanging out" on a corner is getting ready to burn the block down. Most kids make it, most kids, in fact, end up more like their parents than not," etc., etc.

TIMPANE: I guess I really believe that's so. I don't mean to say there are no problems, or to, or to whitewash the situation. But, maybe another way to look at it is, are the problems of adolescence in any way different from, and greater than, the problems of our society as a whole?

MERROW: And your answer?

TIMPANE: My answer is, I'm not at all sure they are. If, if youth are having trouble finding values, does that suggest, perhaps, that values are hidden in our society...

MERROW: Not only from...

TIMPANE: ...rather than that we have hit this...that we have separated youth from them. We have separated everyone from everyone in one way or another. I mean, that's one of the consequences of modernization and technological advance. We have separated family from family. We have separated age group from age group, class from class, occupation from occupation. And, and yes, we are united in other ways: through media, through lots of communications, and even transportation, which never existed before. And within each of these stratum, there is much more communication too than there used to be: kids know many more kids, any given occupation will know there's much more communication within it. And so, while we certainly have changed the kinds of contacts that, that people make one with another, we haven't diminished them. And that we have made young people worse off, or, or, or more at risk relative to everybody else, that's just not clear to me at all.

MERROW: Which is your...

TIMPANE: We're going through a turbulent time, and, when everybody in this society is having trouble figuring out what life means, and other fundamental questions.

BLAIR: Michael Timpane, principal author of "Youth Policy in Transition" and Deputy Director of the National Institute of Education.

MERROW: Timpane mentioned the money that adolescents have to spend. In fact, the so-called "youth market" amounts to $50 billion a year, and a lot of that money goes for music, records, tapes, rock concerts, and so forth.

BLAIR: Music may or may not"soothe the savage beast," but it is very important in the lives of adolescents, as David Selvin found out. A lot of music is written for adolescents, of course, and addresses itself most directly to adolescent anxieties, needs, and feelings. We're told that the newest

phenomenon --"punk rock"-- expresses the anger and frustration of young people, who think their own future is bleak. They blame society.

* * *

'PUNK ROCK': AN ADOLESCENT PHENOMENON

LORBER: Well, basically, it's about violence and boredom. You know, for a lot of teenagers, that's the way of life in the United States and in Britain. And who's to say what's...whose fault that is, or how the society has made that become the way it is. You can see in the early American "punk rock," basically, it was a lot of songs about girls, you know, frustration; but now, it's just frustration with society. It's more of a frustration against society.

* * *

LORBER: It's very similar to, to a Third Reich movement, you know. The fact that you have someone on the platform and he says, "Do it!" and everybody does it, you know. It's very destructive, very dangerous and very scary.

* * *

HARTEL: This indicated a form of rebellion against the older generation, and so, it was something that young people wanted to identify with. This was an expression of their independence, and they said, "This is a music of our own, this is our identity." So that they were very willing to grasp this,and they were willing to follow whoever was responsible for making the music.

* * *

HARTEL: If parents are going to like rock 'n roll music, the teenagers are not going to like it, merely because of the fact that their parents like it.

* * *

HARTEL: Rock 'n roll music is something that teenagers want to have and probably need to have.

* * *

TEENAGER: I grew up with the Beatles, you know, I'm not that old. But their music is who I like to listen to the most. Like he likes Elton John, and we all have our different groups, and without them, you know, it'd really be a bomb!

* * *

LANDAU: I think rock 'n roll is the folk music of the United States today, and the reason that I got interested in it, I got interested in it when I was ten years old, and I got interested in it because it was the thing that spoke... there was a form of communication, the artistic form of communication that spoke most directly to me. I felt the fewest barriers, felt that, you know, whoever was singing on the record was singing right in my ear; whereas with television, movies and books even, there was too much abstraction, there's too much distance. I think rock 'n roll really started as a folk music of the young people in the United States. It was the only art form, or musical form that was directed at adolescents, and so it was a little haven, a little...a body of work that spoke directly to all the concerns of adolescents.

* * *

BLAIR: David Selvin, talking with three students of rock music: Joe

Hartel, a disc jockey who also writes about rock; Steve Lorber, a disc jockey; and John Landau, rock music critic for Rolling Stone Magazine.

MERROW: Popular music by Led Zeppelin, Peter Frampton, and so forth, seems to act as a cultural, social cement for adolescents. It defines the sub-culture: those who listen belong, and those who don't listen don't belong!

BLAIR: Music may help to do something else for adolescents too: fill up the empty spaces and times. Even if the lives of adolescents are regulated and scheduled, there's still a lot of time alone.

MERROW: Alone doesn't have to mean lonely, but for many adolescents it is; and so teenage girls chatter on the telephone, boys hang out, and both play their music.

BLAIR: The music -- nice and loud -- keeps the adults from intruding into the adolescent's inner space -- except perhaps to say...

MERROW: "Turn that music down!"

BLAIR: There's some evidence that that particular parental advice is worth taking. Loud music may be doing permanent damage to the eardrums of our young people.

MERROW: Recently, there have been studies suggesting that the high decibal level -- the loudness -- at which many adolescents play their radios and stereos is doing irreversible damage to their hearing. They may not know it, but they're growing up to be partially deaf.

* * *

BLAIR: Earlier, researcher Reed Larsen talked about what adolescents do when they're with their friends. Reporter Carol Gable gathered some evidence on her own.

TEENAGERS AND THEIR FRIENDS

GABLE: Do you have a lot of friends?

TEENAGER: Yeah.

GABLE: What are they like?

TEENAGER: They're crazy. They're, I guess you could say they're "hell raisers." I don't know, they're a lot of fun to be with.

GABLE: Do you think you fit in with that group?

TEENAGER: Yeah.

GABLE: When you say that they're "hell raisers" what do you mean? What do they do?

TEENAGER: They like to have a good time. I mean, they don't worry about anything. It's just having fun all the time.

GABLE: When...on a typical weekend, and,you know, you start going out and doing stuff on the weekend, what would you do? What are the typical things you would go and do?

TEENAGER: During football season, I would probably go to the football game

on Friday night. And maybe I might go out and get drunk after the game. (Laughs) And then Saturday night's, usually somebody has a party or something. And Saturday's I go shopping, or something like that, and Sunday I just sit around the house all day.

TEENAGER: My friends we, you know, we get out and kid around and, you know, just try and wreck havoc! (Laughs)

GABLE: When you're not "angels" out of town, what are you doing?

TEENAGER: Oh, well, ah, you know, I'm not into any drugs, or drinking, or anything. You know, we mostly get out and go out and go slumming. You know, just do things we're not supposed to do.

GABLE: Like what?

TEENAGER: Just to get away from things. Well, well, the other day, one of the guys, you know, none of us had, have our restricted driver's license yet, and we got out and took off with the car when we weren't supposed to and the police almost stopped us. And, you know, we just do this kind of thing, get out and go screaming through town, hanging out the windows and stuff like this.

GABLE: Why do you do it? Is it exciting?

TEENAGER: It's exciting, it's a breakaway from....You know, like when we get bored, it's just something to cut loose. That's mainly what we do.

MERROW: Adolescents in South Carolina, talking with reporter Carol Gable of station WEPR, Clemson, South Carolina.

BLAIR: We adults may have a distorted view of adolescence because the passage of time has distorted our own memories.

MERROW: We all remember adolescence in different ways, so that one person will say, "The best thing about adolescence is that you outgrow it," while another will look back on freedom, good times, and no responsibilities.

BLAIR: But most of the adults we talked to remember feeling alone and different.

MERROW: And no adults described themselves as "former teenagers."

ADULTS REMEMBERING THEIR ADOLESCENCE

WOMAN: It's only been in the last several years that I've begun to have a more...more of an understanding of what boys, teenage boys, must go through, you know, agonizing over picking up the phone. I was on the other end of the phone and, "Oh God, let him call, please let him call." (Laughs) "When I count to ten he's going to call, the phone's going to ring."

WOMAN: As far as me personally, as a person, alone with myself, I enjoyed myself. I got a kick out of myself. But that was by myself, without any outside interference. Oh, I enjoyed myself. I danced a lot, had tremendous energy in my body to fill it, really get into it, and, and, enjoyed, enjoyed myself.

WOMAN: But the main motivation was to be accepted. As a girl, you know, the whole clothes business was...I mean, you know, don't forget, this was well before women's liberation; and if, if, if cashmere sweaters were in, my God, you had to have your, you know, proper number of cashmere sweaters.

MERROW: Adults in Washington, D.C., remembering their adolescence, under

prodding from David Selvin. Reporter Selvin also got them to talk about high school days.

WOMAN: I remember somebody on the, on the school ground at lunch time saying, "Ey girlie, where'd you get those socks." (Laughs) I was humiliated. It was awful, it was just awful. I mean, I can still work up a blush thinking about it even now.

WOMAN: The successes look bigger when they happen for you in high school. The exciting things were more exciting. It looked like you were really important, and that you were really going to be going somewhere. And when you got old enough -- or dumb enough -- to put it in the context of what our world today, you just realize it's just...it's so little. It's something you lose from high school.

WOMAN: When I don't do something that I want to do now, it's because I feel I've got too much to lose, and I never thought then of what could happen.

WOMAN: I felt like a snob. I felt like...that I was reading things that other people around me weren't reading, and I was also into not doing everything. I was still...I finally saw The Graduate last year, that's how behind I was. And I would not go see that movie, because everybody was seeing it, and it had to be bad.

WOMAN: One pimple could ruin your life for a week, and you always had your mother...you always had disagreements about what you were going to wear. You know, when you thought you looked great, your mother would say "You're going out of the house dressed like THAT!" And you had always very insecure, very tense feeling, and I'm sure that brought out the "zits," but very insecure and very tense all the time, and everything...every little setback was a major... it was a tragedy. You were always suicidal or hysterically happy. Nothing was in middle. You know, everything was exaggerated one way or the other.

MAN: I have real good memories. Even...for me there's a lot of bad stuff back then, and I go, "God, did I do that, was I like that," and, you know, the cruelty, and the insanity, and the competitivenes, and all that. But in retrospect, it's sort of funny, you know. It's good, it's, you know....I have very fond memories of that period.

BLAIR: Those memories aren't all that bad -- perhaps because the humor obscures the embarrassment. There's a lot to be said for selective memory, too. We remember the good, and make the bad better than it was.

MERROW: All of which makes us wonder whether it's more difficult to be an adolescent today, than it was 10, or 25 years ago. And while that may be an impossible question, anthropologist Margaret Mead says we put too much stress on adolescents too soon.

MARGARET MEAD COMMENTS ON THE ADULT-ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIP

MEAD: At the time when they have to get used to the changes in their own bodies, and they have to get used to the fact that you reach for a glass of milk and your eyes are out of focus and you knock it over, and your voice goes up and down--even girls' voices change, of course, though we hardly recognize it--and you're getting used to a new phase physically. We also demand that the people study very hard--or we have until recently--and that they make life choices, and in many places we demand they make religious choices. We dump everything on them at once! Now some people simply say that the only thing that adolescents are going to do is walk around in the moonlight. Other people might keep them only working, and not expect them to make sexual choices so young. And, so that, it's a question of how much choice you allow, and how

much you make them coincident, you see. And we put a terrific burden on adolescents.

And then we expose them to a great deal of heterosexual stimulation, and at the same time, we preached -- until very recently -- that they should have no real sex activity. We don't protect them the way other societies did. If you don't want adolescents to be involved in sex, you chaperone them. But we didn't take...we were too lazy to chaperone them, and we simply resigned, and then preached.

MERROW: Anthropologist Margaret Mead, talking with NPR's Barbara Newman.

BLAIR: As we come to the end of our five-part series on adolescence in America, we're looking for universals, for generalizations that stand up. And maybe what Margaret Mead says is true: that we ask too much, too soon.

MERROW: I took my question about universal experiences to researcher Reed Larsen of the University of Chicago.

ARE THERE UNIVERSAL ADOLESCENT EXPERIENCES?

LARSEN: Yeah, he has to go to high school, and he has to separate himself from his parents somehow. And I think it's those, those environments that are universal, and that the ways that teenagers respond to them are very different and creative, and that each kid makes his own choices about who he's going to be and how he's going to deal with his parents. And...for me, what I like about this method is that it shows adolescence as a landscape, that a teenager has all these different terrains to choose from: he has his family, he has his friends, he has opposite sex friends, he has the school. Each of them is sort of a context of experience, and each is related with a certain set of moods, a certain set of kinds of things he learns; and that he chooses among those. He chooses to participate with his family, he chooses to participate with his friends, and he knows that he gets certain kinds of things from that.

MERROW: Now, there are different landscapes, and I guess what...I'd like to go...to push that a little bit and get you to reflect on whether there are pressures, or forces, or even public policies that push kids from one landscape into another. Certainly, for example, there's a certain kind of social pressure that pushes kids to reject their family landscape at some point, and to...and, you know, that it's "cool" not to be with them, but rather to be with the peers.

LARSEN: I guess I don't accept that point of view. I think that the reason that, particularly boys, don't spend time with their families because it's a negative experience. When they're there, nothing happens. There's nothing exciting for them in it. Their parents have nothing to offer them.

MERROW: Don't you accept the idea that, in some sense, that is the creation of the culture, of, of pressures that social wisdom that that's the way kids, you know, you see "American Graffiti," and that's what's happening there. And somehow that helps it happen again, and again.

LARSEN: On the contrary, in most cultures, you get married at 12 or 13 to get away from your family. It's our culture which is so unrealistic in expecting people to stay with their family till their 18 or 20 which, I think, creates the pressure.

MERROW: So, you think it's a reality that the family...being with the family is a negative thing, and that the, the "American Graffiti" is merely immuring what is real?

LARSEN: Yeah. If there's any pressure, it's pressure on them to stick with their family, and creating a lot of guilt. Particularly for girls, there

seems to be a pressure that they be close to their family, that they try, even though they might not be getting along, to communicate with their, with their mother or their father.

MERROW: Let me push the question though. You just indicated what you think is one pressure that pushes kids into one landscape and away from another they might prefer to be in. Are there other pressures, or policies, or institutions that determine where kids spend their time?

LARSEN: Again, what I'm trying to stress is that people have choices, and that, and that adolescents exercise choice. I think what I would like to point out is the experience of school. We also collected a lot of data on what kids are feeling, thinking about, and reacting to when they're in school; and I think this particularly -- and really hits home with me -- as an environment the kids don't particularly want to be in, or at least...they have mixed feelings. They realize that there's a cultural pressure, and that they've got to get 20 years of education to be anyone in this society.

On the other hand, their, their experiences in class are typically rotten, and the moods in class are even more negative; they're the most negative of all the different contexts we looked at. They're bored, they're turned off, their concentration is low. They're thinking about...like 60% of the time, they're thinking about something other than what's going on in the class; they're mind's not there, their heart's not there, they don't want to be there. Sure, they're learning some things, but I'm...isn't there a better way? I mean, isn't there some way we can, we can have people learn things in environments where they want to learn things, where they're intrinsically motivated with it?

MERROW: Do you think there's something...I mean, do you conclude from that there's something intrinsically wrong with the, with the way schools are run, or is it the coercive situation per se? I mean, they're after all they're captive...a captive audience?

LARSEN: I'm saying we could do better. I'm saying we should try to, to really structure education in a way that it's enjoyable. And if not, just because of the satisfaction of students because I think when people are enjoying things, they learn much better.

BLAIR: Reed Larsen of the University of Chicago.

MERROW: Larsen makes the point that there's a lot yet to be learned about adolescents, and so, perhaps our search for generalizations ought to be abandoned.

BLAIR: But it's hard to resist sweeping statements. After all, we know that some young people use drugs and alcohol, and so,perhaps unconsciously, we assume that most, or all, young people use them. We know that a lot of young girls are sexually active, so we assume it's true for all of them.

MERROW: In fact, half of the 19 year-old females are sexually active: that is, have had sexual intercourse. But that also means that 50% are not.

BLAIR: Carleen Riccelli, a guidance counselor in Amherst, Massachusetts, told Tom Looker that most, maybe all, of our assumptions about adolescent misbehavior are just plain wrong!

WE MAY BE WRONG IN OUR ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR

RICCELLI: Numbers of students that are really, you know, suffering from drug usage, or from unisexual activities are very much in the minority, I think, but they get the most publicity, obviously. They make news. I mean,

you know, who wants to hear a story about so and so who is just like a super kid, and, you know, has done so well, you know, in their studies--ho hum, right? I mean, that's really important to me, and it's very important to parents, because these are the kids that we are in contact with.

If you want to know my politics, I think there's a conspiracy about delaying adolescence. I mean, it's in the youth oriented culture where we have a lot of young people, the tendency for the older generation is to say, "Well, you're not an adult until you're married; you're not an adult until you're 21, 33," I mean, keep extending it so that you can discredit that group longer. (Laughs) And the longer you delay adolescence, or prolong it, the longer you don't have to deal with, you know, the reality that those people are a developing adult.

BLAIR: Carleen Riccelli, a guidance counselor in Amherst, Massachusetts, talking with reporter Tom Looker.

MERROW: A lot of adults worry that adolescents are going too far, that they have too much freedom. Some adults would turn back the clock to the so-called "good old days," others want to guide adolescents through these "uncharted territories," and still other adults argue that adolescents must be responsible as well as free.

BLAIR: There's even support for more rights for adolescents.

MORE RIGHTS FOR ADOLESCENTS

ELLIOTT: If you look at the whole progress, particularly in this country, and in Northern and Western Europe, of the, of respect for and advancing the rights of minors, and the opportunities of minors -- young people -- in all kinds of ways, it's not just sex. It has to do with whether or not they can go and travel by themselves, or whether they're free to make decisions about their education -- they weren't a few years ago -- where they decide what clothes to wear, what music to listen to. I mean, quite clearly, though I think we're not witnessing the breakdown of the family, we're witnessing certainly a very...a massive reorientation of the kinds of signals that govern young people as they go through this very difficult stage of adolescence.

BLAIR: That's Robin Elliott of Planned Parenthood. He was interviewed for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION by JoEllyn Rackleff.

ELLIOTT: The church influence is declining. Clearly that was a highly conservative force. Family influence is probably declining, but more important, it's changing. There's more liberal attitudes in many areas, including sex -- just one of the many areas. The school has a different kind of a role: people now are demanding rights to publish their own high school newspapers, where they never would have 20 years ago. These, these practices, I think, have enlarged in part just as a cultural development, but in part they've been promoted by different interpretations of law. I mean, there have been court decisions in areas affecting young people which have established their rights to do this or to not do that, which really weakens the whole in loca parentis role of a school, compared with traditional times. And in this kind of context, it seems to me, it'd be very surprising if you didn't find young people doing certain things, and experimenting in certain ways, including the sex area, that they wouldn't have before. This, to my mind, is the most important factor of all, though I've no scientific evidence upon which to base this. It's a partial breakdown, and even more important, a partial reorientation of the institutions that govern young people as they grow up and it's much broader than the school, and it's much wider than just the issue of sex education. It's, I think, it's pervasive.

BLAIR: Robin Elliott of Planned Parenthood, talking with JoEllyn Rackleff.

MERROW: He may believe, as Dr. Jean Shub does, that there is no such thing as a bad kid.

NO SUCH THING AS A BAD KID

SHUB: I can't say that I've ever met a child where I felt, oh, this is just a bad, awful child, that I couldn't respond to with some affection and caring. And I think that the reason for that is that you...that myself and many people have the sense of possibilities in a child. So that you have a sense of, of a growing, developing being who may at that moment be doing very obnoxious, difficult things. But somehow, you don't have the sense of those behaviors being so tied to the child, so that you would label them a bad person.

WATSON: It seems to me, over the years, I've read of so many cases where a child seemingly had everything going for them as far as family goes, as far as loving care at home, and so forth, and he turns out terrible. He's out robbing banks, killing people, going on drugs, the whole thing. Why?

SHUB: That's a big question! I think that...you certainly can't give one answer to that question. My sense of what happens in cases like that that I know of is that in many cases we're really wrong when we said everything was going fine. Everything seemed fine on the surface, and so all...maybe the outward behaviors appeared acceptable, the child was succeeding, and yet, in terms of the child realizing his own personality, his own style, I, I think in some cases that that wasn't recognized enough, and also the other thing, the focus on discipline. That in many cases the child didn't grow up learning that, you know, living in a world means living with other people, and that some accommodation is necessary. So, I think, that things were probably, in most of those cases, you know, somewhat wrong before.

MERROW: Child psychologist, Jean Shub of The Whitney Young Health Center in Albany. She talked with John Watson of member station WAMC, Albany, New York.

BLAIR: One generalization we're comfortable with has more to do with adults than with adolescents, and that is that most adults need help in understanding them.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz of the Learning Institute of North Carolina, says we're particularly ignorant about early adolescence: young people ages 12 to 15.

SOCIETY DOES NOT UNDERSTAND EARLY ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

LIPSITZ: I have talked to judges and -- juvenile judges -- and they tell me how absolutely desperate they are for some training in understanding early adolescent development. They know that the crime is peaking here. They don't know who these kids are, and they are quite convinced that the society at large doesn't know who they are, or who they want them to be.

MERROW: Dr. Lipsitz told reporter Barbara Bernhard that we don't give enough serious thought to our adolescents and their needs.

LIPSITZ: I gave a talk in Washington a few weeks ago, and an HEW official who sets health policy for adolescents said, how wonderful it was to have an hour in which to think about this age group that he had never thought about! So obviously, the dialogue needs to begin, the training needs to begin, the data base needs to be formed. We need, then, as a result of this, to be able to make recommendations about better support systems for families. We would be able then to

have the cadre of leadership that could make recommendations for schools. See, one of the problems about schooling for this age group is that as a society right now, we're very confused about we want schooling to be-- for anybody. And, at the same time, as a society, we're very confused about who we want young adolescents to be. Well, when you get this convergence of these two confusions exactly at this point of critical development,"They don't know who they want me to be, and they don't know what schooling should be; and here I am in the school 180 days a year!"

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz, author of Growing Up Forgotten, a study of early adolescence. She spoke with reporter Barbara Bernhard of station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

BLAIR: But with all the problems, all the stereotypes in the media, and all the confusion, it's worth remembering that most adolescents make it! Three-quarters of our young people become functioning, productive adults, and that's a good start anyway.

MERROW: And it's also worth noting that each individual adolescent ends up more like his or her parents, than not. We're born into families, and our parents have dreams for us. We never turn out exactly as planned, but the home leaves an indelible stamp -- for better, or in some cases, for worse.

BLAIR: Thomas Wolfe has told us that we "can't go home again," but Joan Lipsitz adds, "Neither can we ever leave home completely behind."

MERROW: As parents, we know how we'd like our kids to turn out, but it may be the better part of wisdom and valor to relax a bit and not worry so much.

AND NOW, BACK TO OUR EXPERTS

LIPSITZ: If you have an expectation that all behavior is going to be tumultuous, than two things happen. One is that you help create it, it's a self-fulfilling prophesy. At the very first sign of testing-out behavior, you react either violently against it and you put down all kinds of inappropriate controls, or you throw up your hands in despair and you abdicate all responsibility exactly at a point when the adolescent is in fact almost hiring you as a police officer...

PARENT: ...talked to people. They say, "My mother got married when she was 14, my grandmother when she was 13," and so forth. So, what's new, that was a long time ago. So maybe they have come the whole circle. Now they're just more uptight about it. I don't know. They just make a big thing about all these things rather...

BRONFENBRENNER: ...they're compounds, outside the community in which there's no regular commerce to the community, with the community, to get there you have to go on a special bus and have a special status--it's not even a public bus--and they are the breeding grounds of alienation. The schools are the focus, the major focus in our society for vandalism and violence. Every school now has a security budget, and we keep trying to control it.

LIPSITZ: ...one way we create problems by this myth of, "They're all crazy, they're all off the wall, they're all pathological." On the other hand, if we expect all of them to be very disturbed then we are not going to look at the kids who really are very disturbed, who in fact are "distressed." In other words, we haven't learned to distinguish between "distressing" and "distressed" behavior. "Distressing" behavior is behavior that 'drives me up the wall," and I have to learn how to deal with that as a parent....

TIMPANE: ...is to try to keep the baggage as light as the trip calls for.

(Laughs)

MERROW: Explain what you mean.

TIMPANE: Which is to say, to, to know, to understand what you really feel it's important that you pass on to your child, and what is not. And I think that most of us start out with a great long "shopping list" of things that we want to pass on to our children, and almost none of us check off every item on that list....

BRONFENBRENNER: ...established a segregated society, and persuaded ourselves that each group ought to be, you know, by itself. We ship the old people down to Florida, and the teenagers ought to have their own life, we got the rec room for them so we can have peace and quiet, and so on. And we are, in my judgment, neglecting the fact that we are a species which is not wired in biologically for the young to be able to grow into adulthood, except through the intervention of -- and I do mean intervention -- of an adult member of the species. It's much more important in our species than it is, say, in birds...

DONELAN: ...accepting their adolescence and working through their, their...say their actual problems. It is also assumed that everybody grows out of adolescence. Some people never grow out of adolescence. They remain quite adolescent in their attitudes and views all of their life, and they do not develop mature attitudes. Secondly there is a. .

TEENAGER: ...It's wonderful because I really don't have too many responsibilities. I'm very happy right now, and if my life could just go on as it is now, you know, it'd be fine. I know that I'm always going to be taken care of financially right now, and people are very friendly. I don't have too many headaches.

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BLAIR: This special five-part series, "Adolescence in America" was developed by John Merrow, JoEllyn Rackleff, David Selvin, and Katharine Ferguson.

MERROW: Material for this program came in part from Barbara Bernhard, station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina; John Watson, WAMC, Albany, New York; Carol Gable, WEPR, Clemson, South Carolina; Tom Looker in Amherst, Massachusetts; Bill Blackton in Los Angeles, California; and Barbara Newman, JoEllyn Rackleff and David Selvin in Washington.

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BLAIR: You can buy the set of five transcripts of this series by sending $2.00 to National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C., 20036. The five cassettes are also available for $25.00.

MERROW: The set of five transcripts also contains a bibliography of reference material about adolescence. The five transcripts cost $2.00; the five cassettes are $25.00.

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MERROW: We also have a program guide free for the asking with our schedule for the next three months. It lists the available transcripts from previous OPTIONS IN EDUCATION programs.

BLAIR: Here's the address again: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C.,20036. Ask for Programs 92 through 96, "Adolescence in

America."

MERROW: And please, tell us the call letters of your NPR station.

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BLAIR: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is written and produced by John Merrow. The assistant producer is Katharine Ferguson; technical assistance by Skip Pesce and Chip Fetrow. I'm Wendy Blair.

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MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and this is NPR -- National Public Radio.

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